

THE
SERMONS
OF *W.*
DR. J. SWIFT,

DEAN OF ST. PATRICK'S, DUBLIN.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED

THE AUTHOR'S LIFE:

TOGETHER WITH HIS

PRAYER FOR STELLA,

HIS

THOUGHTS

ON, AND

PROJECT

FOR THE

ADVANCEMENT OF RELIGION.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

Sold by R. DAMPIER, J. THOMPSON, W.
MANSON, T. DAVIDSON, and P.
WATSON.

SERMONS

OF

THE REV. J. W. WILKINSON

OF THE CHURCH OF ST. MARY, LONDON

THE NEW TESTAMENT



THE NEW TESTAMENT

THE NEW TESTAMENT

THE NEW TESTAMENT

THE NEW TESTAMENT

VOL. I.

LONDON:
Printed by J. W. WILKINSON,
15, Abchurch Lane, in the City of London.
1851.

C O N T E N T S

O F T H E

F I R S T V O L U M E.

S E R M O N I.

Mutual SUBJECTION.

—*Yea, all of you be subject one to another.* 1 St. PETER V. 5.

S E R M O N II.

Testimony of CONSCIENCE.

—*For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience.* 2 COR. I. VER. 11. Part of it.

S E R M O N III.

T H E T R I N I T Y.

For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one. 1 Epist. gen. of St. John, VER. 7.

iv CONTENTS.

S E R M O N IV.

DIFFICULTY OF KNOWING
ONE'S SELF.

And Hazael said, But what, is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing? 2 KINGS viii. Part of the 13th verse.

S E R M O N V.

FALSE WITNESS.

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour. EXODUS xx. 16.

S E R M O N VI.

POOR MAN'S CONTENTMENT.

I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. PHILIP. Chap. iv. Part of the 11th Verse.

AN

A N
A C C O U N T
O F
THE LIFE OF
DR. JONATHAN SWIFT, D.S.P.D.

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

LIBRARY

OF THE

PHYSICAL SCIENCES

AND

THE

DEPARTMENT OF

THE

PHYSICAL SCIENCES

AND

THE

DEPARTMENT OF

THE

PHYSICAL SCIENCES

AND

THE

A N
A C C O U N T
O F
THE LIFE OF
DR. JONATHAN SWIFT, D. S. P. D.

[Taken from the Earl of ORRERY, and Others.]

THE account of his family shall be as short as possible; since, although his ancestors were persons of very decent and reputable characters, he himself has been the herald to blazon the dignity of their coat. His grandfather was the Reverend

viii THE LIFE OF

Mr Thomas Swift Vicar of Goodridge near Ross in Herefordshire. He enjoyed a paternal estate, which is now in possession of his great grandson Dean Swift, Esq; He died in the year 1658, leaving six sons, Godwin, Thomas, Dryden, William, Jonathan and Adam. Two of them, Godwin and Jonathan, had sons. The descendants of Godwin are mentioned in Guillim's heraldry. Jonathan married Mrs Abigail Erick of Leicestershire, by whom he had one daughter and a son. The daughter was born in the first year of Mr. Swift's marriage; but he lived not to see the birth of his son, which happened on the 30th of November 1667, two months after the father's death, and who was called Jonathan, in memory of his father; and became afterwards the famous Dean of St. Patrick's.

trick's.—Soon after his birth, he was carried into England by his nurse; who being obliged to cross the sea, and having a nurse's fondness for the child at her breast, conveyed him on ship-board without the knowledge of his mother or relations, and kept him with her at Whitehaven in Cumberland, during her residence three years at that place.

THE greatest part of Mr. Swift's income had depended upon agencies, and other employments of that kind: So that most of his fortune perished with him; the little he had saved being scarce a subsistence for his widow, the children were taken care of by Godwin, who inherited the paternal estate.

THE circumstance of his being
a 5 three

X THE LIFE OF

three years in England, gave rise to a notion, that he was born there; and some supposed him to be the natural son of the celebrated Sir William Temple; but it is evident that Sir William Temple was employed as a minister abroad from the year 1665, to the year 1670, first at Brussels, and afterwards at the Hague, as will be found by his correspondence with the Earl of Arlington, and other ministers of state; so that Dr. Swift's mother, who never crossed the sea, could have no personal correspondence with Sir William Temple, till some years after her son's birth.

AT six years old he was sent to a school at Kilkenny, and, about eight years afterwards, he was entered a student of Trinity College, Dublin. He lived there in a perfect regularity,

ty, and under an entire obedience to the statutes: But the moroseness of his temper often rendered him very unacceptable to his companions; so that he was little regarded and less beloved. Nor were the academical exercises agreeable to his genius. The studies which he followed, were history and poetry; in these he made a great progress; but to all other branches of sciences he had given so little application, that he was refused his degree of *batchelor of arts* for insufficiency; and at last obtained it only *speciali gratia*, a phrase which, in that university, carries with it the utmost marks of reproach.

—Mrs Pilkington tells us, that, when she first heard the Dean relate this circumstance, she told him, she supposed he had been idle; but he affirmed the contrary, assuring her,

“ he was really dull.” But however just this treatment might be, it filled him with indignation, and he resolved to pursue his studies at Oxford, where producing the testimony of his degree, the words *specialia gratia* being thought to imply extraordinary merit, he was immediately admitted *ad eundem*: He chose to enter himself of Hart-hall, now Hertford college; where, except some visits to his mother at Leicester, and to Sir William Temple at Moor-park, Surrey, whose lady was related to Mr. Swift’s mother, he constantly resided till he took his degree of master of arts, which was in the year 1691.

His uncle, Godwin, continued to support him till the year of the revolution; but falling about that time

time into a lethargy, Sir William Temple enabled him to continue his studies at Oxford; and, when he quitted that university, received him to his house as his friend and domestic companion.---Mr. Swift's uncle, William, assisted him, when at Oxford, with repeated acts of friendship and affection.

WHEN he had been about two years at Moor-park, he contracted a long and dangerous illness, by eating an immoderate quantity of fruit; and to this surfeit he ascribed that giddiness in his head, which continued ever afterwards, with irregular intermissions, and terminated in total debility of body and mind.

By the advice of his physicians, when he was sufficiently recovered to travel,

travel, he went into Ireland, to try the effect of his native air, and received so much benefit by the journey, that, in a short time, he believed his health to be confirmed, and returned into England to his patron, Sir William, who had now settled at Sheen, and was often visited by King William. Here Swift had frequent opportunities of conversing with the Prince, who once offered to make him a captain of horse; an offer, which, in splenetick dispositions, he always seemed sorry to have refused. But, at that time, he had resolved to take orders; and soon after went to Ireland, and immediately enlisted himself under the banner of the church. He was recommended by Sir William Temple to Lord Capel, then Lord Deputy, who gave him the first vacant benefice, which was a prebendary

bendary, worth about 100 l. *per annum*.

SWIFT soon grew weary of being at so great a distance from London, and was impatient to return to the conversation in which he delighted: He therefore resigned his prebendary in favour of a friend, and returned to *Sheen*, where he continued till the death of Sir William Temple; who, besides a pecuniary legacy, left to him the publication of his posthumous works.

THE King had promised Sir William Temple, that Swift should be put into the first vacancy which should happen among the prebends of Westminster or Canterbury. He therefore, upon the death of his patron, came to London and delivered a petition
to

to his Majesty, in which he claimed his promise; but, it producing no effect, after a long attendance at Whitehall, he gave up, with reluctance, all thoughts of a settlement in England; for though he had dedicated Sir William Temple's works to the King, his Majesty never took the least notice of him after Sir William's death.---From this first disappointment, may, probably, be dated that bitterness towards kings and courtiers, which is to be found so universally dispersed throughout his works.

HE accepted of an invitation from the Earl of Berkeley, who was appointed one of the Lords Justices in Ireland, to attend him as his chaplain and private secretary : But one Bush, another of Lord Berkeley's attendants,

tendants, found means to insinuate to his Lordship, that the post of Secretary was not proper for a clergyman : Lord Berkeley listened perhaps too attentively to these insinuations, and making some apology to Mr. Swift, divested him of that office, and bestowed it upon Mr. Bush.---This injurious treatment Swift revenged by a short, but biting satire, intitled, The Discovery.

HOWEVER, during the government of the Earls of Berkeley and Galway, who were jointly Lords Justices of Ireland, two livings, Laracor and Rathbeggan, were bestowed upon Mr. Swift : The first of these rectories was worth about 200 l. and the latter about 60 l. a-year; and they were the only preferments that he enjoyed

ed till he was appointed Dean of St. Patrick's in the year 1713.

As soon as he had taken possession of his two livings, he went to Laracor, and gave publick notice to his parishioners, that he would read prayers on every Wednesday and Friday. On the next Wednesday the bell was rung, and the rector attended in the desk, when, after having sat some time, and finding the congregation to consist only of himself and his clerk Roger, he began with great composure and gravity, but with a turn peculiar to himself, "Dearly
" beloved Roger, the scripture mo-
" veth you and me in sundry places,"
&c. and then proceeded regularly through the whole service. This trifling circumstance is mentioned, only to shew, that he could not resist a
vein

vein of humour, whenever he had an opportunity of exerting it.

A STRICT residence at Laracor was not in the least suitable to his disposition; he made frequent excursions not only to Dublin, but to London. In the mean time, the rich deanry of Derry became vacant, and would have been given to him by Lord Berkeley, if Dr. King, then Bishop of Derry, and afterwards Archbishop of Dublin, had not intreated of his Lordship, with great earnestness, that, as Derry was situated in the midst of presbyterians, the deanry might be given to some grave and elderly divine, who would reside upon the spot, and not to Swift, who was an ingenious and sprightly young man, and would be frequently absent: Swift was accordingly set aside for his *youth*; but he lived to see

see Dr. King set aside for his *age*, when, upon the death of Dr. Lindsay, he claimed the primacy of Ireland; but this disappointment the Archbishop no otherwise resented, than by receiving the new Primate Dr. Bolter, in his own house, without rising from his chair, and making this apology: "My Lord, I am certain your Grace will forgive me, because, you know, "I am too old to rise."

IN 1701, Mr. Swift took his Doctor's degree, and in the end of that year King William died. Upon the accession of Queen Anne, the Doctor came into England. It cannot be denied, that the chief ministers of that queen, whether distinguished under titles of whigs or tories, were, from the beginning to the end of her reign, encouragers of learning, and patrons
of

of learned men.—The wits and poets of that æra were numerous and eminent; amidst the croud, yet shining above the rest, appeared Dr. Swift.

*Ipse ante alios pulcherrimus omnes,
Infert se socium Æneas, atque agmina
jungit.*

He was known to the great men of each denomination: And although he had been bred up and educated with whigs, he soon attached himself openly to the tories, because, as he said, the whigs had renounced their old principles, and received others, which their forefathers held in utter abhorrence. It may be asserted, and will redound to the honour of Dr. Swift, that when he rose into the confidence and esteem of those great men who sat at the helm of affairs, he scarce ever

ver lost himself, or grew giddy by the plenitude of power. He may have been carried away by inconsiderate passion, but he was not to be swayed by deliberate evil. He may have erred in judgment, but he was upright in intention.

AMONG the various branches into which Swift's expansive genius spread itself, those peculiar talents of leveling his writings to the lowest, and sustaining their dignity to the highest capacity, were probably the original motives that attracted the Earl of Oxford's friendship to him.---

FROM 1702 to 1710, he laboured, though secretly, yet with great diligence, in prosecuting the schemes that were formed to produce the change in the ministry which then happened:

By

By that time the character of Dr. Swift, as an author, was perfectly established; and, from the year 1710 to 1713, he was busied in maintaining the cause of the ministry, in pamphlets, poems, and weekly papers, and was then made Dean of St. Patrick's, in point of power and revenue esteemed no inconsiderable promotion; but to an ambitious mind, whose perpetual aim was a settlement in England, it must appear, (as perhaps it was designed) an honourable and profitable banishment; perhaps his temper might occasion his English friends to wish him happily promoted at a distance; his spirit was often intractable, the motions of his genius often irregular. He assumed more the air of a patron, than that of a friend, and affected rather to dictate than advise.

THE

THE Queen had intended him a bishoprick in England, which was constantly the object of his ambition; but Dr. Sharp, Archbishop of York, represented him to the Queen as not being a Christian, and a certain great Lady supported the aspersions; the Queen therefore, at length, gave the bishoprick to another. Swift, after this event, still spoke of the Queen with decorum; but his resentment was without bounds when he mentioned the Archbishop or the Lady.

UPON his arrival in Ireland, to take possession of his deanry, he found the rage of party so violent, that the common people, who had been taught to look upon him as a Jacobite, threw stones and dirt at him as he passed through the streets. The Chapter of St. Patrick's received him with reluctance,

luctance, and opposed all his measures; he was avoided as a pestilence; he was opposed as an invader; he was marked out as an enemy to his country.---Fewer talents, and less firmness, must have yielded to such an outrageous opposition: *Sed contra audentior ibat.* He knew too much of human nature to be discouraged too much at this treatment.---His first attempt was to reduce to reason and obedience his reverend brethren of the chapter; and in this he succeeded so perfectly, that, in a short time they held him in the highest respect and veneration, and submitted implicitly to whatever he proposed.

HAVING established himself in his deanry he returned to England, in the beginning of the year 1714; where he found two great friends disunited,

and the Queen declining in her health, and distressed in her situation. He exerted his utmost to reconcile the ministers; but, finding his pains fruitless, he retired, desponding and disappointed, to a friend's house in Berkshire, where he remained till the Queen died; an event which put a final period to all his views in England; he therefore returned as fast as possible to Dublin. As he was known to have been attached to the Queen's last ministry; to have written against the whigs; and "to have oiled many a spring which Harley moved," he met with frequent indignities, not only from the populace, but from persons of all ranks; a treatment that increased the sourness of his temper, confined his acquaintance, and added bitterness to his style.

IN

IN the year 1716, he was privately married by Dr. Ashe, then Bishop of Clogher, to a lady whom he has celebrated by the name of Stella. She was the daughter of Sir William Temple's steward, whose name was Johnson; and Sir William, when he died, left her 1000 l. on account of her father's faithful services. She was a person of great delicacy, extremely beautiful, and equally remarkable for the sweetness of her temper, and the poignancy of her wit; her understanding was of the first class; her prudence uncommon; and her piety exemplary. The Dean became acquainted with her while he lived with Sir William Temple. When she first left England, is not known; but they continued the same œconomy of life after marriage as before; he remained at the deanry, she in lod-

gings at the other side of the Liffy. He never openly acknowledged her for his wife, nor did their intimacy exceed the bounds of Platonick love; such care being always taken to summon witnesses of their conversation, that it would perhaps be impossible to prove, that they had ever been together, but in the presence of at least a third person.---Upon this extraordinary conduct, the Earl of Orrery observes, that there are actions, the true motives of which will never be known ; and that this fact is perhaps one, which, having related as he learned it from the Dean's friends, he leaves to the reader's observations. She died in January 1728. Her death occasioned great regret to the Dean ; for he never afterwards mentioned her name without a sigh.

ABOUT

ABOUT the year 1720, the Dean, who had been so lately neglected, aspersed, and pelted, began to be popular ; but his popularity was not universal till the publication of the Drapier's Letters ; he then became the idol of the people ; his health was drank in every company, and his effigies displayed in every street ; the rabble crouded after him with acclamations ; he was eminently a lawgiver to the weavers, who frequently came in a body to receive his advice in settling the rates of their manufactures, and the wages of their journeymen ; and when elections were depending for the city of Dublin, many corporations refused to declare themselves till they knew his sentiments and inclinations. Over the populace he was now the most absolute monarch that ever governed

men; he was regarded by persons of every rank, with veneration and esteem; and in the possession of this power, thus admired and beloved, he continued till he lost his senses; a loss which he seemed to foresee, and which he prophetically lamented to his friends.

WE are now drawing towards the last scene of his life; the total deprivation of his senses came upon him by degrees. In the year 1736, he was seized with a violent fit of giddiness. He was at that time writing a satirical poem, called, The Legion Club; but he found the effects of his giddiness so dreadful, that he left this poem unfinished; and never afterwards attempted a composition of any length, either in verse or prose.---However, his conversation still remained the same;

same ; lively and severe ; but his memory gradually grew worse and worse, and, as that decreased, he appeared every day more fretful and impatient. From the year 1739 to 1741, his friends found his passions so violent and ungovernable, his memory so decayed, and his reason so depraved, that they took the utmost precautions to keep all strangers from approaching him : Early in the year 1742, the small remains of his understanding became entirely confused, and the violence of his rage increased to a degree of madness. He sunk afterwards into a quiet, speechless idiot ; and dragged out the remainder of his life in this helpless situation. He died in October 1745. The manner of his death was easy, without the least pang or convulsion.

HE used often to lament the state of childhood and idiotism, to which some of the greatest men of this nation were reduced before their death. He mentioned as examples, the Duke of Marlborough, and Lord Somers: And, when he cited these melancholy instances, it was always with a heavy sigh, as if he felt an impulse of what was to happen to himself.

HE died worth about 12,000 l. inclusive of the legacies mentioned in his will, which may be computed at the sum of 1200 l. So that near 11,000 is entirely applicable to the hospital for idiots and lunatics: A charitable foundation, particularly in these kingdoms, where the epidemic distemper of lunacy is so prevalent!

THUS died Dr. Swift, whose capacity

pacity and strength of mind, says Lord Orrery, were undoubtedly equal to any task whatever. His pride, his spirit, or ambition, call it by what name you please, was boundless; but his views were checked in his younger years, and the anxiety of that disappointment had a visible effect upon all his actions. He was four and seventy, but not absolutely ill-natured. He was sociable only to particular friends, and to them only at particular hours. He knew politeness more than he practised it. He was a mixture of avarice and generosity; the former was frequently prevalent, the latter seldom appeared, unless excited by compassion. He was open to adulation, and could not, or would not distinguish between low flattery and just applause. His abilities rendered him superior to envy. He was

undisguised and perfectly sincere. He performed the duties of the church with great punctuality and a decent degree of devotion. He read prayers rather in a strong nervous voice, than in a graceful manner: And although he has been often accused of irreligion, nothing of that kind appeared in his conversation or behaviour.

AFTER he returned to Dublin, he seldom went beyond his own garden; but his attendance upon the service of the church was regular and uninterrupted: His hours of walking and reading never varied: His motions were regulated by his watch, which was almost constantly in his hand, or on the table before him.---His house was a seraglio of virtuous women, who attended him from morning to night, with an obedience, an awe
and

and assiduity, that perhaps is not paid to the Grand Signior himself. To these ladies he communicated every composition as soon as it was finished, who passed their judgment upon it; as they constantly asked, they almost constantly obtained a copy; so that many of his pieces appeared in print by their means, which would otherwise have been suppressed.

HENCE it is that many indigested pieces, unfit for publick view, have crept abroad; but the good-natured part of mankind will agree with Mr. Pope, who, in one of his letters to Dr. Swift, says,

“ —I have nothing so much at heart,
 “ as to shew the silly world, that men
 “ of wit, or even poets, may be the
 b 6 “ most

“ most moral of mankind. A few
 “ loose things sometimes fall from
 “ them, by which censorious fools
 “ judge as ill of them as possibly they
 “ can, for their own comfort: And
 “ indeed when such unguarded and
 “ trifling *jeux d’esprit* have once got
 “ abroad, all that prudence, or re-
 “ pentance can do, since they cannot
 “ be denied, is, to put them fairly
 “ upon that foot; and teach the
 “ publick to distinguish betwixt our
 “ studies and our idlenesses, our works
 “ and our weaknesses.” Letter 64.

A
P R A Y E R
F O R
S T E L L A.

THE
LIBRARY
OF THE
MUSEUM
OF
COMPARATIVE ZOOLOGY
AND ANATOMY
HARVARD UNIVERSITY
CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

FRAY

FOR

STELLER

A

P R A Y E R

F O R

S T E L L A.

ALMIGHTY and most gracious
 Lord God, extend, we beseech
 thee, thy pity and compassion to-
 wards this thy languishing servant :
 Teach her to place her hope and con-
 fidence entirely in thee ; give her a
 true sense of the emptiness and va-
 nity of all earthly things ; make her
 truly sensible of all the infirmities of
 her life past, and grant to her such

xl PRAYER FOR S T E L L A.

a true sincere repentance as is not to be repented of. Preserve her, O Lord, in a sound mind and understanding, during this thy visitation; keep her from both the sad extremes of presumption and despair. If thou shalt please to restore her to her former health, give her grace to be ever mindful of that mercy, and to keep those good resolutions she now makes in her sickness, so that no length of time, nor prosperity, may entice her to forget them. Let no thought of her misfortunes distract her mind, and prevent the means towards her recovery, or disturb her in her preparations for a better life. We beseech thee also, O Lord, of thy infinite goodness to remember the good actions of this thy servant; that the naked she hath clothed, the hungry she hath fed, the sick and the fatherless

PRAYER FOR S T E L L A. xli

fatherless whom she hath relieved, may be reckoned according to thy gracious promise, as if they had been done unto thee. Hearken, O Lord, to the prayers offered up by the friends of this thy servant in her behalf, and especially those now made by us unto thee. Give thy blessing to those endeavours used for her recovery; but take from her all violent desire, either of life or death, further than with resignation to thy holy will. And now, O Lord, we implore thy gracious favour towards us here met together; grant that the sense of this thy servant's weakness may add strength to our faith, that we, considering the infirmities of our nature, and the uncertainty of life, may, by this example, be drawn to repentance before it shall please thee to visit us in the like manner. Ac-
cept

xlii PRAYER FOR S T E L L A.

cept these prayers, we beseech Thee,
for the sake of thy dear Son Jesus
Christ, our Lord; who, with Thee
and the Holy Ghost, liveth and reign-
eth ever one God world without end.
Amen.

THOUGHTS

THOUGHTS
ON
RELIGION.

THE
HISTORY
OF
THE
CITY
OF
NEW
YORK
FROM
1624
TO
1898
BY
JOHN
B. HOGAN
AND
JAMES
M. SMITH
NEW
YORK
1898

THOUGH
ON
RELIGION

T H O U G H T S

O N

R E L I G I O N.

I AM in all opinions to believe according to my own impartial reason; which I am bound to inform and improve, as far as my capacity and opportunities will permit.

It may be prudent in me to act sometimes by other men's reason, but I can think only by my own.

If another man's reason fully convinceth me, it becomes my own reason.

To

xlvi THOUGHTS ON RELIGION.

To say a man is bound to believe,
is neither truth nor sense.

You may force men, by interest or
punishment, to say or swear they
believe, and to act as if they believ-
ed: You can go no further.

EVERY man, as a member of the
commonwealth, ought to be content
with the possession of his own opi-
nion in private, without perplexing
his neighbour or disturbing the pub-
lic.

VIOLENT zeal for truth hath an
hundred to one odds to be either pe-
tulance, ambition, or pride.

THERE is a degree of corruption
wherein some nations, as bad as the
world is, will proceed to an amend-
ment;

ment; till which time particular men should be quiet.

To remove opinions fundamental in religion is impossible, and the attempt wicked, whether those opinions be true or false; unless your avowed design be to abolish that religion altogether. So for instance, in the famous doctrine of Christ's divinity, which hath been universally received by all bodies of Christians, since the condemnation of Arianism under Constantine and his successors: Wherefore the proceedings of the Socinians are both vain and unwarrantable; because they will be never able to advance their own opinion, or meet any other success than breeding doubts and disturbances in the world. *Qui ratione sua disturbant mœnia mundi.*

THE

xlvi THOUGHTS ON RELIGION.

THE want of belief is a defect that ought to be concealed when it cannot be overcome.

THE Christian religion, in the most early times, was proposed to the Jews and Heathens without the article of Christ's divinity; which, I remember, Erasmus accounts for, by its being too strong a meat for babes. Perhaps if it were now softened by the Chinese missionaries, the conversion of those infidels would be less difficult: And we find by the Alcoran, it is the great stumbling-block of the Mahometans. But in a country already Christian, to bring so fundamental a point of faith into debate, can have no consequences that are not pernicious to morals and public peace.

THOUGHTS ON RELIGION. xlix

I HAVE been often offended to find St. Paul's allegories, and other figures of Grecian eloquence, converted by divines into articles of faith.

God's mercy is over all his works, but divines of all sorts lessen that mercy too much.

I LOOK upon myself in the capacity of a clergyman, to be one appointed by providence for defending a post assigned me, and for gaining over as many enemies as I can. Although I think my cause is just, yet one great motion is my submitting to the pleasure of providence, and to the laws of my country.

I AM not answerable to God for the doubts that arise in my own breast, since they are the consequence

I THOUGHTS ON RELIGION.

of that reason which he hath planted in me, if I take care to conceal those doubts from others, if I use my best endeavours to subdue them, and if they have no influence on the conduct of my life.

I believe that thousands of men would be orthodox enough in certain points, if divines had not been too curious, or too narrow, in reducing orthodoxy within the compass of subtleties, niceties, and distinctions, with little warrant from scripture, and less from reason or good policy.

I NEVER saw, heard, nor read, that the clergy were beloved in any nation where Christianity was the religion of the country. Nothing can

THOUGHTS ON RELIGION. II

can render them popular but some degree of persecution.

THOSE fine gentlemen who affect the humour of railing at the clergy, are, I think, bound in honour to turn parsons themselves, and shew us better examples.

MISERABLE mortals! can we contribute to the *honour and glory of God*? I could wish that expression were struck out of our Prayer-books.

LIBERTY of conscience, properly speaking, is no more than the liberty of professing our own thoughts and opinions, which every man enjoys without fear of the magistrate: But how far he shall publicly act in pursuance of those opinions, is to be regulated by the laws of the country.

iii THOUGHTS ON RELIGION.

try. Perhaps, in my own thoughts, I prefer a well-instituted commonwealth before a monarchy; and I know several others of the same opinion. Now, if, upon this pretence, I should insist upon liberty of conscience, form conventicles of republicans, and print books preferring that government and condemning what is established, the magistrate would, with great justice, hang me and my disciples. It is the same case in religion, although not so avowed, where liberty of conscience, under the present acceptation, equally produces revolutions, or at least convulsions and disturbances in a state; which politicians would see well enough, if their eyes were not blinded by faction, and of which these kingdoms, as well as France, Sweden, and other countries, are flaming

THOUGHTS ON RELIGION. lili

ing instances. Cromwell's notion upon this article was natural and right; when, upon the surrender of a town in Ireland, the Popish governor insisted upon an article for liberty of conscience, Cromwell said, he meddled with no man's conscience; but, if by liberty of conscience, the governor meant the liberty of the Mass, he had express orders from the parliament of England against admitting any such liberty at all.

It is impossible that any thing so natural, so necessary, and so universal as death, should ever have been designed by providence as an evil to mankind.

ALTHOUGH reason were intended by providence to govern our passions,

c 3

ye

t

liv THOUGHTS ON RELIGION.

yet it seems that, in two points of the greatest moment to the being and continuance of the world, God hath intended our passions to prevail over reason. The first is, the propagation of our species, since no wise man ever married from the dictates of reason. The other is, the love of life, which from the dictates of reason, every man would despise, and wish it at an end, or that it never had a beginning.

FUR-

**FURTHER
THOUGHTS**

ON

RELIGION.

Я. Е. Л. Г. О. М.

[111]

FURTHER

THOUGHTS

ON

RELIGION.

THE scripture system of man's creation is what Christians are bound to believe, and seems most agreeable of all others to probability and reason. Adam was formed from a piece of clay, and Eve from one of his ribs. The text mentioneth nothing of his Maker's intending him for, except to rule over the beasts of the field and birds of the air. As to
Eve

△

Iviii THOUGHTS ON RELIGION.

Eve, it doth not appear that her husband was her monarch, only she was to be his help meet, and placed in some degree of subjection. However, before his fall, the beasts were his most obedient subjects, whom he governed by absolute power. After his eating the forbidden fruit, the course of nature was changed, the animals began to reject his government; some were able to escape by flight, and others were too fierce to be attacked. The scripture mentioneth no particular acts of royalty in Adam over his posterity, who were cotemporary with him, or of any monarch until after the flood; whereof the first was Nimrod, the mighty hunter, who, as Milton expresseth it, made men, and not beasts, his prey. For men were easier caught by promises, and subdued by the folly.

THOUGHTS ON RELIGION. lix

ly or treachery of their own species. Whereas the brutes prevailed only by their courage or strength, which, among them, are peculiar to certain kinds. Lions, bears, elephants, and some other animals are strong or valiant, and their species never degenerates in their native soil, except they happen to be enslaved or destroyed by human fraud: But men degenerate every day, merely by the folly, the perverseness, the avarice, the tyranny, the pride, the treachery, or inhumanity of their own kind.

THOUGHTS ON SLAVERY

It is the property of each own species
to exercise virtue prevailed only by
their courage or strength, which, a-
mong them, are peculiar to certain
kinds. Lion, tiger, elephant, and
some other animals are strong or va-
liant, and their species never dege-
nerates in their native soil, except
they happen to be enslaved or de-
stroyed by human hands. But men
degenerate every day, and by the
folly, the perverseness, the avarice,
the tyranny, the pride, the treache-
ry, or inhumanity of their own kind.

6 MA 65

S E R M O N I.

O N

Mutual SUBJECTION.

VOL. I. A



Michael SUBJECTION

Vol. I. A

S E R M O N I.

I St. PETER V. 5.

— *Yea, all of you be subject one to another.*



THE apostle, having in many parts of this epistle, given directions to Christians concerning the duty of subjection or obedience to superiors; in the several instances of the subject to his prince, the child to his parent, the servant to his master, the wife to the husband, and the younger to the elder; doth here, in the words of the text, sum up the whole, by advancing a point

4 S E R M O N I.

of doctrine, which at first may appear a little extraordinary; *Yea, all of you*, saith he, *be subject one to another*. For, it should seem, that two persons cannot properly be said to be subject to each other, and that subjection is only due from inferiors to those above them: yet saint Paul hath several passages to the same purpose. For he exhorts the *Romans*, in honour to prefer one another; * and the *Philippians*, that in lowliness of mind they should let each esteem other better than themselves; † and the *Ephesians*, that they should submit themselves one to another in the fear of the Lord ‡. Here we find these two great apostles recommending to all Christians this duty of mutual subjection. For we may observe by saint Peter, that

* Rom. xii. 10.

† Phil. ii. 3.

‡ Ephes. v. 21.

S E R M O N I. 5

that having mentioned the several relations which men bear to each other, as governor and subject, master and servant, and the rest which I have already repeated, he maketh no exception, but summeth up the whole with commanding *all to be subject one to another*. From whence we may conclude, that this subjection, due from all men to all men, is something more than the compliment of course, when our betters are pleased to tell us they are our humble servants, but understand us to be their slaves.

I know very well, that some of those who explain this text, apply it to humility, to the duties of charity, to private exhortations, and to bearing with each other's infirmities; and, it is probable, the apostle may

6 S E R M O N I.

have had a regard to all these: but, however, many learned men agree, that there is something more understood, and so the words in their plain natural meaning must import; as you will observe yourselves, if you read them with the beginning of the verse, which is thus: *Like-wise ye younger submit yourselves unto the elder: Yea, all of you be subject one to another.* So that, upon the whole, there must be some kind of subjection due from every man to every man, which cannot be made void by any power, pre-eminence, or authority whatever. Now, what sort of subjection this is, and how it ought to be paid, shall be the subject of my present discourse.

As God hath contrived all the works of nature to be useful, and in
some

S E R M O N I. 7

some manner a support to each other, by which the whole frame of the world under his providence is preserved and kept up; so, among mankind, our particular stations are appointed to each of us by God Almighty, wherein we are obliged to act, as far as our power reacheth, towards the good of the whole community. And he who doth not perform that part assigned him, towards advancing the benefit of the whole, in proportion to his opportunities and abilities, is not only an useless, but a very mischievous member of the public; because he taketh his share of the profit, and yet leaveth his share of the burden to be borne by others, which is the true principal cause of most miseries and misfortunes in life. For, a wise man who doth not assist with his

8 S E R M O N I.

counfels, a great man with his protection, a rich man with his bounty and charity, and a poor man with his labour, are perfect nuifances in a commonwealth. Neither is any condition of life more honourable in the fight of God than another; otherwise he would be a refpecter of perfons, which he affureth us he is not: for he hath propofed the fame falvation to all men, and hath only placed them in different ways or ftations to work it out. Princes are born with no more advantages of ftrength or wifdom than other men; and, by an unhappy education, are uſually more defective in both than thouſands of their ſubjects. They depend for every neceſſary of life upon the meanest of their people: beſides, obedience and ſubjection were never enjoined by God to humour the paſſions,

S E R M O N I. 9

sions, lusts and vanities of those who demand them from us; but we are commanded to obey our governors, because disobedience would breed seditions in the state. Thus, servants are directed to obey their masters, children their parents, and wives their husbands; not from any respect of persons in God, but because otherwise there would be nothing but confusion in private families. This matter will be clearly explained, by considering the comparison which saint *Paul* maketh between the church of Christ and the natural body of man: for the same resemblance will hold, not only to families and kingdoms, but to the whole corporation of mankind. *The eye, saith he, cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again the hand to the foot, I have no need of thee. Nay, much more, those*

10 S E R M O N I.

*members of the body which seem to be more feeble, are necessary. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.** The case is directly the same among mankind. The prince cannot say to the merchant, I have no need of thee, nor the merchant to the labourer, I have no need of thee. Nay, much more those members, *etc.* for the poor are generally more necessary members of the commonwealth than the rich; which clearly shews, that God never intended such possessions for the sake and service of those to whom he lends them: but because he hath assigned every man his particular station to be useful in life; and this for the reason
given

* Rom. xii 21. c. xiii. 26.

S E R M O N I. 11

given by the apostle, *that there may be no schism in the body.*

FROM hence may partly be gathered the nature of that subjection which we all owe to one another. God Almighty hath been pleased to put us into an imperfect state, where we have perpetual occasion of each other's assistance. There is none so low, as not to be in a capacity of assisting the highest; nor so high, as not to want the assistance of the lowest.

It plainly appeareth, from what hath been said, that no one human creature is more worthy than another in the sight of God; farther, than according to the goodness or holiness of their lives; and, that power, wealth, and the like out-

ward advantages, are so far from being the marks of God's approving or preferring those on whom they are bestowed, that, on the contrary, he is pleased to suffer them to be almost engrossed by those who have least title to his favour. Now, according to this inequality wherein God hath placed all mankind, with relation to himself, you will observe, that in all the relations between man and man, there is a mutual dependence, whereby the one cannot subsist without the other. Thus, no man can be a prince without subjects, nor a master without servants, nor a father without children. And this both explaineth and confirms the doctrine of the text: for, where there is a mutual dependence, there must be a mutual duty, and consequently a mutual subjection.

subjection. For instance; the subject must obey his prince, because God commandeth it, human laws require it, and the safety of the public maketh it necessary. (For the same reasons we must obey all who are in authority, and submit ourselves, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward, whether they rule according to our liking or no.) On the other side, in those countries that pretend to freedom, princes are subject to those laws which their people have chosen; they are bound to protect their subjects in liberty, property, and religion; to receive their petitions, and redress their grievances: so that the best prince is, in the opinion of wise men, only the greatest servant of the nation; not only a servant to the public in general, but in some
 fort

fort to every man in it. In the like manner, a servant oweth obedience, and diligence, and faithfulness to his master, from whom at the same time he hath a just demand for protection, and maintainance and gentle treatment. Nay, even the poor beggar hath a just demand of an alms from the rich man, who is guilty of fraud, injustice, and oppression, if he doth not afford relief according to his abilities.

BUT this subjection we all owe one another is no where more necessary, than in the common conversation of life; for without it there could be no society among men. If the learned would not sometimes submit to the ignorant, the wise to the simple, the gentle to the forward, the old to the weakneses of the

S E R M O N I. 15

the young, there would be nothing but everlasting variance in the world. This our Saviour himself confirmed by his own example; for he appeared in the form of a servant, and washed his disciples feet, adding these memorable words, *Ye call me Lord and Master, and ye say well, for so I am. If I then your Lord and Master wash your feet, how much more ought ye to wash one another's feet?* Under which expression of washing the feet, is included all that subjection, assistance, love, and duty, which every good Christian ought to pay his brother, in whatever station God hath placed him. For the greatest prince and the meanest slave are not by infinite degrees so distant, as our Saviour and those disciples whose feet he vouchsafed to wash.

AND,

16 S E R M O N I.

AND, although this doctrine of subjecting ourselves to one another may seem to grate upon the pride and vanity of mankind, and may therefore be hard to be digested by those who value themselves upon their greatness or their wealth; yet, is it really no more than what most men practise upon other occasions. For, if our neighbour, who is our inferior, cometh to see us, we rise to receive him, we place him above us, and respect him as if he were better than ourselves; and this is thought both decent and necessary, and is usually called good-manners. Now the duty required by the apostle is, only that we should enlarge our minds, and that what we thus practise in the common course of life, we should imitate in all our actions and proceedings whatever; since our Sa-
viour

viour telleth us, that every man is our neighbour; and since we are so ready in the point of civility, to yield to others in our own houses, where only we have any title to govern.

HAVING thus shewn you what sort of subjection it is which all men owe to one another, and in what manner it ought to be paid, I shall now draw some observations from what hath been said.

AND, *First*; A thorough practice of this duty of subjecting ourselves to the wants and infirmities of each other, would utterly extinguish in us the vice of pride. For, if God hath pleased to intrust me with a talent, not for my own sake, but for the service of others, and at
the

the same time hath left me full of wants and necessities which others must supply; I can then have no cause to set any extraordinary value upon myself, or to despise my brother, because he hath not the same talents which were lent to me. His being may probably be as useful to the public as mine; and therefore, by the rule of right reason, I am in no sort preferable to him.

Secondly; It is very manifest from what hath been said, that no man ought to look upon the advantages of life, such as riches, honour, power, and the like, as his property, but merely as a trust, which God hath deposited with him, to be employed for the use of his brethren; and God will certainly punish the breach of that trust, although the laws

S E R M O N I. 19

laws of man will not, or rather indeed, cannot; because the trust was conferred only by God, who hath not left it to any power on earth to decide infallibly, whether a man maketh a good use of his talents or no, or to punish him where he faileth. And therefore God seemeth to have more particularly taken this matter into his own hands, and will most certainly reward or punish us in proportion to our good or ill performance in it. Now, although the advantages which one man possesseth more than another, may in some sense be called his property with respect to other men, yet with respect to God, they are, as I said, only a trust: which will plainly appear from hence. If a man does not use those advantages to the good of the public, or the benefit of his neighbour,

20 S E R M O N I

bour, it is certain he does not deserve them; and consequently, that God never intended them for a blessing to him; and on the other side, whoever doth employ his talents as he ought, will find by his own experience, that they were chiefly lent him for the service of others; for to the service of others he will certainly employ them.

Thirdly; If we could all be brought to practise this duty of subjecting ourselves to each other, it would very much contribute to the general happiness of mankind: for this would root out envy and malice from the heart of man; because you cannot envy your neighbour's strength, if he maketh use of it to defend your life, or carry your burden; you cannot envy his wisdom,
if

if he giveth you good counsel; nor his riches, if he supplieth you in your wants; nor his greatness, if he employeth it to your protection. The miseries of life are not properly owing to the unequal distribution of things; but God Almighty, the great King of heaven, is treated like the kings of the earth; who, although, perhaps, intending well themselves, have often most abominable ministers and stewards, and those generally the vilest, to whom they entrust the most talents. But here is the difference, that the princes of this world see by other men's eyes, but God sees all things; and therefore whenever he permitteth his blessings to be dealt among those who are unworthy, we may certainly conclude, that he intends them as a punishment to an evil world,

22 S E R M O N I.

world, as well as to the owners. It were well, if those would consider this, whose riches serve them only as a spur to avarice, or as an instrument to their lusts; whose wisdom is only of this world, to put false colours upon things; to call good, evil, and evil, good, against the conviction of their own consciences; and lastly, who employ their power and favour in acts of oppression or injustice, in misrepresenting persons and things, or in countenancing the wicked to the ruin of the innocent.

Fourthly; THE practice of this duty of being subject to one another would make us rest contented in the several stations of life wherein God has thought fit to place us; because it would in the best and easiest manner, bring us back as it were

were to that early state of the gospel, when Christians had all things in common. For, if the poor found the rich disposed to supply their wants; if the ignorant found the wise ready to instruct and direct them; or, if the weak might always find protection from the mighty; they could none of them, with the least pretence of justice, lament their own condition.

FROM all that hath been hitherto said, it appears, that great abilities of any sort, when they are employed as God directeth, do but make the owners of them greater and more painful servants to their neighbour and the public: however, we are by no means to conclude from hence, that they are not really blessings, when they are in the

the hands of good men. For, first, what can be a greater honour than to be chosen one of the stewards and dispensers of God's bounty to mankind! What is there, that can give a generous spirit more pleasure and complacency of mind, than to consider, that he is an instrument of doing much good! That great numbers owe to him, under God, their subsistence, their safety, their health, and the good conduct of their lives! The wickedest man upon earth taketh a pleasure in doing good to those he loveth; and therefore, surely, a good Christian, who obeyeth our Saviour's command of loving all men, cannot but take delight in doing good even to his enemies. God, who giveth all things to all men, can receive nothing from any; and those among men, who do the most
good,

good, and receive the fewest returns, do most resemble their Creator: for which reason, St. *Paul* delivereth it as a saying of our Saviour, that *it is more blessed to give than to receive*. By this rule, what must become of those things which the world valueth as the greatest blessings, riches, power, and the like, when our Saviour plainly determines, that the best way to make them blessings, is to part with them? Therefore, although the advantages which one man hath over another, may be called blessing, yet they are by no means so in the sense the world usually understandeth. Thus, for example, great riches are no blessings in themselves; because the poor man, with the common necessities of life, enjoyeth more health, and hath fewer cares without them: how then do they

26 S E R M O N I.

become blessings? No otherwise, than by employing them in feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, rewarding worthy men, and in short, doing acts of charity and generosity. Thus likewise, power is no blessing in itself, because private men bear less envy, and trouble, and anguish without it. But when it is employed to protect the innocent, to relieve the oppressed, and to punish the oppressor, then it becometh a great blessing. And, so lastly, even great wisdom is, in the opinion of *Solomon*, not a blessing in itself; For *in much wisdom is much sorrow*; and men of common understandings, if they serve God, and mind their callings, make fewer mistakes in the conduct of life, than those who have better heads. And yet, wisdom is a mighty blessing, when it is applied

S E R M O N I. 27

plied to good purposes, to instruct the ignorant, to be a faithful counsellor in public or private, to be a director to youth, and to many other ends needless here to mention.

To conclude: God sent us into the world to obey his commands, by doing as much good as our abilities will reach, and as little evil as our many infirmities will permit. Some he hath only trusted with one talent, some with five, and some with ten. No man is without his talent ; and he that is faithful or negligent in a little, shall be rewarded or punished, as well as he that hath been so in a great deal.

CONSIDER what hath been said, *etc.*

B 2

SER-

The ignorant, who are a faithful coun-
selor to youth, and to many o-

[illegible]

Continued on next page

S E R M O N II.

O N T H E

TESTIMONY of CONSCIENCE.

2 E R M O N I I

O N T H E

Testimony of CONSCIENCE

S E R M O N II.

2 COR. I. VER. 11. Part of it.

— *For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience.*

THERE is no word more frequent in the mouths of men, than that of *conscience*, and the meaning of it is in some measure generally understood: however, because it is likewise a word extremely abused by many people, who apply other meanings to it, which God Almighty never intended; I shall explain it to you in the clearest manner I am able. The word *conscience* properly

B 4. signifies,

32 S E R M O N II.

signifies, that knowledge which a man hath within himself of his own thoughts and actions. And, because, if a man judgeth fairly of his own actions, by comparing them with the law of God, his mind will either approve or condemn him, according as he hath done good or evil; therefore the knowledge or conscience may properly be called both an accuser and a judge. So that whenever our conscience accuseth us, we are certainly guilty; but we are not always innocent when it doth not accuse us: for very often, through the hardness of our hearts, or the fondness and favour we bear to ourselves, or through ignorance, or neglect, we do not suffer our conscience to take any cognizance of several sins we commit. There is another office likewise, belonging to conscience,

S E R M O N II. 33

conscience, which is that of being our director and guide; and the wrong use of this hath been the occasion of more evils under the sun, than almost all other causes put together. For, as conscience is nothing else but the knowledge we have of what we are thinking and doing; so it can guide us no farther than that knowledge reacheth. And therefore God hath placed conscience in us to be our director only in those actions which scripture and reason plainly tell us to be good or evil. But in cases too difficult or doubtful for us to comprehend or determine, there conscience is not concerned; because it cannot advise in what it doth not understand, nor decide where it is itself in doubt: but by God's great mercy, those difficult points are never of absolute necessity

ty to our salvation. There is likewise another evil, that men often say, a thing is against their conscience, when really it is not. For instance; ask any of those who differ from the worship established, why they do not come to church? They will say, they dislike the ceremonies, the prayers, the habits, and the like, and therefore it goeth against their conscience: but they are mistaken, their teacher hath put those words into their mouth; for a man's conscience can go no higher than his knowledge; and therefore until he has thoroughly examined by scripture, and the practice of the ancient church, whether those points are blameable or no, his conscience cannot possibly direct him to condemn them. Hence have likewise arisen those mistakes about
 what

what is usually called, *liberty of conscience*; which properly speaking, is no more than a liberty of knowing our own thoughts; which liberty no one can take from us. But those words have obtained quite different meanings: liberty of conscience is now a days not only understood to be the liberty of believing what men please, but also of endeavouring to propagate the belief as much as they can, and to overthrow the faith which the laws have already established, to be rewarded by the public for those wicked endeavours: and this is the liberty of conscience which the fanatics are now openly in the face of the world endeavouring at with their utmost application. At the same time it cannot but be observed, that those very persons, who under a pretence of a public spirit,

36 S E R M O N II.

and tenderness towards their Christian brethren, are so jealous for such a liberty of conscience as this, are of all others the least tender of those who differ from them in the smallest point relating to government; and I wish I could not say, that the majesty of the living God may be offended with more security than the memory of a dead prince. But the wisdom of the world, at present, seemeth to agree with that of the heathen emperor, who said, If the gods were offended, it was their own concern, and they were able to vindicate themselves.

BUT although conscience hath been abused to those wicked purposes which I have already related, yet a due regard to the directions it plainly giveth us, as well as to its accusations,

S E R M O N II. 37

accusations, reproaches, and advices, would be of the greatest use to mankind, both for their present welfare and future happiness.

THEREFORE, my discourse at this time, shall be directed to prove to you, that there is no solid, firm foundation for virtue, but on a conscience which is guided by religion.

IN order to this, I shall first shew you the weakness and uncertainty of two false principles which many people set up in the place of conscience, for a guide to their actions.

THE first of these false principles is, what the world usually calleth *moral honesty*. There are some people, who appear very indifferent as to religion, and yet have the repute of
being

38 S E R M O N II.

being just and fair in their dealings; and these are generally known by the character of good moral men. But now, if you look into the grounds and motives of such a man's actions, you shall find them to be no other than his own ease and interest. For example; you trust a moral man with your money in the way of trade; you trust another with the defence of your cause at law, and perhaps they both deal justly with you. Why? Not from any regard they have for justice, but because their fortune dependeth upon their credit, and a stain of open public dishonesty must be to their disadvantage. But let it consist with such a man's interest and safety to wrong you, and then it will be impossible you can have any hold upon him; because there is nothing left to give him

him a check, or to put in the balance against his profit. For, if he hath nothing to govern himself by, but the opinion of the world, as long as he can conceal his injustice from the world, he thinketh himself safe.

BESIDES, it is found by experience, that those men who set up for morality, without regard to religion, are generally but virtuous in part; they will be just in their dealings between man and man; but if they find themselves disposed to pride, lust, intemperance, or avarice, they do not think their morality concerned to check them in any of these vices, because it is the great rule of such men, that they may lawfully follow the dictates of nature, wherever their safety, health, and fortune

tune are not injured. So, that upon the whole, there is hardly one vice which a mere moral man may not upon some occasions allow himself to practise.

THE other false principle, which some men set up in the place of conscience, to be their director in life, is what those who pretend to it, call *honour*.

THIS word is often made the sanction of an oath; it is reckoned a great commendation to be a man of strict honour; and it is commonly understood, that a man of honour can never be guilty of a base action. This is usually the stile of military men; or persons with titles; and of others who pretend to birth and quality. It is true indeed, that in ancient

S E R M O N II. 41

cient times, it was universally understood, that honour was the reward of virtue; but, if such honour as is now a days going, will not permit a man to do a base action, it must be allowed, there are very few such things as base actions in nature. No man of honour, as that word is usually understood, did ever pretend that his honour obliged him to be chaste or temperate; to pay his creditors; to be useful to his country; to do good to mankind; to endeavour to be wise or learned; to regard his word, his promise, or his oath; or, if he hath any of these virtues, they were never learned in the catechism of honour; which containeth but two precepts, the punctual payment of debts contracted at play, and the right understanding the several degrees of an affront, in order

order to revenge it by the death of an adversary.

BUT suppose, this principle of honour, which some men so much boast of, did really produce more virtues than it ever pretended to; yet since the very being of that honour dependeth upon the breath, the opinion, or the fancy of the people; the virtues derived from it, could be of no long or certain duration. For example: suppose a man from a principle of honour should resolve to be just, or chaste, or temperate; and yet the censuring world should take a humour of refusing him those characters; he would then think the obligation at an end: or, on the other side, if he thought he could gain honour by the falsest and vilest actions (which is a case that very often

S E R M O N II. 43

often happeneth) he would then make no scruple to perform it. And God knoweth, it would be an unhappy state, to have the religion, the liberty, or the property of a people lodged in such hands, which however hath been too often the case.

WHAT I have said upon this principle of honour may perhaps be thought of small concernment to most of you who are my hearers: however, a caution was not altogether unnecessary, since there is nothing by which not only the vulgar, but the honest tradesman hath been so much deceived, as this infamous pretence to honour in too many of their betters.

HAVING thus shewn you the weakness and uncertainty of those principles

44 S E R M O N II.

ciples which some men set up in the place of conscience to direct them in their actions, I shall now endeavour to prove to you, that there is no solid, firm, foundation of virtue, but in a conscience directed by the principles of religion.

THERE is no way of judging how far we may depend upon the actions of men, otherwise than by knowing the motives and grounds, and causes of them; and if the motives of our actions be not resolved and determined into the law of God, they will be precarious and uncertain, and liable to perpetual changes. I will shew you what I mean, by an example: suppose a man thinketh it his duty to obey his parents, because reason telleth him so, because he is obliged by gratitude, and because
the

S E R M O N II. 45

the laws of his country command him to do so: but, if he stoppeth here, his parents can have no lasting security; for an occasion may happen, wherein it may be extremely his interest to be disobedient, and where the laws of the land can lay no hold upon him: therefore, before such a man can safely be trusted, he must proceed farther, and consider that his reason is the gift of God; that God commanded him to be obedient to the laws, and did moreover in a particular manner enjoin him to be dutiful to his parents; after which, if he layeth a due weight upon those considerations, he will probably continue in his duty to the end of his life: because no earthly interest can ever come in competition to balance the danger of offending his Creator, or the happiness of
pleasing

46. S E R M O N II.

pleasing him. And of all this his conscience will certainly inform him, if he hath any regard to religion.

Secondly; FEAR and hope are the two greatest natural motives of all men's actions: but, neither of these passions will ever put us in the way of virtue, unless they be directed by conscience. For although virtuous men do sometimes accidentally make their way to preferment, yet the world is so corrupted, that no man can reasonably hope to be rewarded in it, merely upon account of his virtue. And consequently, the fear of punishment in this life will preserve men from very few vices, since some of the blackest and basest do often prove the surest steps to favour; such as ingratitude, hypocrisy, treachery, malice, subornation,

S E R M O N II. 47

tion, atheism, and many more, which human laws do little concern themselves about. But when conscience placeth before us the hopes of everlasting happiness, and the fears of everlasting misery; as the reward and punishment of our good or evil actions, our reason can find no way to avoid the force of such an argument, otherwise than by running into infidelity.

Lastly; CONSCIENCE will direct us to love God, and to put our whole trust and confidence in him. Our love of God will inspire us with a detestation for sin, as what is of all things most contrary to his divine nature; and if we have an entire confidence in him, *that* will enable us to subdue and despise all the allurements of the world.

It

48 S E R M O N II.

It may here be objected, If conscience be so sure a director to us Christians, in the conduct of our lives, how cometh it to pass, that the ancient heathens, who had no other lights but those of nature and reason, should so far exceed us in all manner of virtue, as plainly appeareth by many examples they have left on record?

To which it may be answered; First, those heathens were extremely strict and exact in the education of their children; whereas amongst us, this care is so much laid aside, that the more God hath blessed any man with estate or quality, just so much less in proportion is the care he taketh in the education of his children, and particularly of that child which is to inherit his fortune; of which

which the effects are visible enough among the great ones of the world. Again, those heathens did, in a particular manner, instil the principle into their children of loving their country; which is so far otherwise now a-days, that of the several parties amongst us, there is none of them that seem to have so much as heard, whether there be such a virtue in the world; as plainly appeareth by their practices, and especially when they are placed in those stations where they can only have opportunity of shewing it. *Lastly*; The most considerable among the heathens did generally believe rewards and punishments in a life to come; which is the great principle for conscience to work upon: whereas, too many of those who would be thought the most considerable among

50 S E R M O N II.

us, do, both by their practices, and their discourses, plainly affirm, that they believe nothing at all of the matter.

WHEREFORE, since it hath manifestly appeared, that a religious conscience is the only true solid foundation upon which virtue can be built; give me leave before I conclude, to let you see how necessary such a conscience is, to conduct us in every station and condition of our lives.

THAT a religious conscience is necessary in any station, is confessed even by those who tell us, that all religion was invented by cunning men, in order to keep the world in awe. For, if religion, by the confession of its adversaries, be necessary

sary towards the well-governing of mankind; then every wise man in power will be sure not only to chuse out for every station under him, such persons as are most likely to be kept in awe by religion, but likewise to carry some appearance of it himself, or else he is a very weak politician. And accordingly, in any country where great persons affect to be open despisers of religion, their counsels will be found at last to be fully as destructive to the state as the church.

It was the advice of *Jethro* to his son-in-law *Moses*, to provide able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness, and to place such over the people; and *Moses*, who was as wise a statesman, at least, as any in this age, thought fit to follow

52 S E R M O N II.

that advice. Great abilities, without the fear of God, are most dangerous instruments, when they are trusted with power. The laws of man have thought fit, that those who are called to any office of trust, should be bound by an oath to the faithful discharge of it: but, an oath is an appeal to God, and therefore can have no influence, except upon those who believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of those that seek him, and a punisher of those who disobey him: and therefore, we see, the laws themselves are forced to have recourse to conscience in those cases, because their penalties cannot reach the arts of cunning men, who can find ways to be guilty of a thousand injustices, without being discovered, or at least without being punished. And the reason
why

why we find so many frauds, abuses, and corruptions where any trust is conferred, can be no other, than that there is so little conscience and religion left in the world, or at least that men in their choice of instruments have private ends in view, which are very different from the service of the publick. Besides, it is certain, that men who profess to have no religion, are full as zealous to bring over profelytes as any papist or fanatic can be. And therefore, if those who are in station high enough to be of influence or example to others; if those (I say) openly profess a contempt or disbelief of religion, they will be sure to make all their dependents of their own principles; and what security can the public expect from such persons, whenever their interest or their lusts

54 S E R M O N II.

come into competition with their duty! It is very possible for a man who has the appearance of religion, and a great pretender to conscience, to be wicked and an hypocrite; but, it is impossible for a man who openly declareth against religion, to give any reasonable security that he will not be false, and cruel, and corrupt, whenever a temptation offereth, which he valueth more than he doth the power wherewith he was trusted. And, if such a man doth not betray his cause and his master, it was only because the temptation was not properly offered, or the profit was too small, or the danger too great. And hence it is, that we find so little truth or justice among us, because there are so very few, who either in the service of the public, or in common dealings with each

S E R M O N II. 55

each other, do ever look farther than their own advantage, and how to guard themselves against the laws of the country; which a man may do by favour, by secrecy, or by cunning, although he breaketh almost every law of God.

THEREFORE to conclude. It plainly appears, that unless men are guided by the advice and judgment of a conscience founded on religion, they can give no security that they will be either good subjects, faithful servants of the public, or honest in their mutual dealings; since there is no other tie through which the pride, or lust, or avarice, or ambition, of mankind will not certainly break one time or other.

CONSIDER what hath been said, *etc.*

1841

1842

1843

1844

1845

1846

1847

1848

1849

1850

1851

1852

1853

1854

1855

1856

1857

1858

1859

1860

1861

1862

1863

1864

1865

1866

1867

1868

1869

1870

1871

1872

1873

1874

1875

1876

1877

1878

1879

1880

1881

1882

1883

1884

1885

1886

1887

1888

1889

1890

1891

1892

1893

1894

1895

1896

1897

1898

1899

1900

S E R M O N III.

O N T H E

T R I N I T Y.

C 5

S E R M O N III

ON THE

T E R M I N A T I O N

OF

S E R M O N III.

I Epist. gen. of St. JOHN, VER. 7.

For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one.

THIS day being set apart to acknowledge our belief in the eternal TRINITY, I thought it might be proper to employ my present discourse entirely upon that subject; and, I hope, to handle it in such a manner, that the most ignorant among you may return home better informed of your duty in this great point, than probably you are at present.

60 S E R M O N III.

It must be confessed, that by the weakness and indiscretion of busy, or, at best, of well-meaning people, as well as by the malice of those who are enemies to all revealed religion, and are not content to possess their own infidelity in silence, without communicating it to the disturbance of mankind; I say, by these means, it must be confessed, that the doctrine of the Trinity hath suffered very much, and made Christianity suffer along with it. For these two things must be granted: First, That men of wicked lives would be very glad there were no truth in Christianity at all; and secondly, If they can pick out any one single article in the Christian religion, which appeareth not agreeable to their own corrupted reason, or to the arguments of those bad people,

S E R M O N III. 61

people, who follow the trade of seducing others, they presently conclude, that the truth of the whole gospel must sink along with that one article; which is just as wise, as if a man should say, because he disliketh one law of his country, he will therefore observe no law at all; and yet, that one law may be very reasonable in itself, although he doth not allow it, or doth not know the reason of the lawgivers.

THUS it hath happened with the great doctrine of the Trinity: which word is indeed not in scripture, but was a term of art invented in the earlier times, to express the doctrine by a single word, for the sake of brevity and convenience. The doctrine then, as delivered in holy scripture, although not exactly in the
same

62 S E R M O N III.

same words, is very short, and amounteth only to this, that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, are each of them God, and yet that there is but one God. For, as to the word *person*, when we say there are three persons; and as to those other explanations in the *Athanasian* creed, this day read to you (whether compiled by *Athanasius* or no) they were taken up three hundred years after Christ, to expound this doctrine; and I will tell you upon what occasion. About that time there sprang up an heresy of a people called *Arrians*, from one *Arrius* the leader of them. These denied our Saviour to be God, although they allowed all the rest of the gospel (wherein they were more sincere than their followers among us.) Thus the Christian world was divided into
two

two parts, until at length, by the zeal and courage of saint *Athanasius*, the *Arrians* were condemned in a general council, and a creed formed upon the true faith, as saint *Athanasius* hath settled it. This creed is now read at certain times in our churches, which, although it is useful for edification to those who understand it; yet, since it containeth some nice and philosophical points, which few people can comprehend, the bulk of mankind is obliged to believe no more than the scripture-doctrine, as I have delivered it. Because that creed was intended only as an answer to the *Arrians* in their own way, who were very subtle disputers.

BUT, this heresy having revived in the world about an hundred years ago,

64 S E R M O N III.

go, and continued ever since; not out of a zeal to truth, but to give a loose to wickedness, by throwing off all religion; several divines, in order to answer the cavils of those adversaries to truth and morality, began to find out farther explanations of this doctrine of the Trinity, by rules of philosophy; which have multiplied controversies to such a degree, as to beget scruples that have perplexed the minds of many sober Christians, who otherwise could never have entertained them.

I MUST therefore be so bold to affirm, that the method taken by many of those learned men, to defend the doctrine of the Trinity, hath been founded upon a mistake.

IT must be allowed, that every
man

S E R M O N III. 65

man is bound to follow the rules and directions of that measure of reason which God hath given him; and indeed he cannot do otherwise, if he will be sincere, or act like a man. For instance: if I should be commanded by an angel from heaven to believe it is mid-night at noon-day; yet I could not believe him. So, if I were directly told in scripture, that *three are one*, and *one is three*, I could not conceive or believe it in the natural common sense of that expression, but must suppose that something dark and mystical was meant, which it pleased God to conceal from me and from all the world. Thus, in the text, *There are three that bear record*, &c. Am I capable of knowing and defining what union and what distinction there may be in the divine nature; which possibly may
be

66 S E R M O N III.

be hid from the angels themselves. Again, I see it plainly declared in scripture, that there is but one God; and yet I find our Saviour claiming the prerogative of God in knowing men's thoughts; in saying, *He and his Father are one*; and *before Abraham was, I am*. I read, that the disciples worshipped him: that *Thomas* said to him, *My Lord, and my God*. And, *St. John*, chap. 1st, *In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God*. I read likewise, that the Holy Ghost bestowed the gift of tongues, and the power of working miracles; which, if rightly considered, is as great a miracle as any, that a number of illiterate men should of a sudden be qualified to speak all the languages then known in the world; such as could be done by the inspiration

S E R M O N III. 67

ration of God alone. From these feveral texts it is plain, that God commandeth us to believe there is an union, and there is a distinction; but what that union, or that distinction is, all mankind are equally ignorant, and must continue so, at least until the day of judgment, without some new revelation.

BUT because I cannot conceive the nature of this union and distinction in the divine nature, am I therefore to reject them as absurd and impossible; as I would, if any one told me, that three men are one, and one man is three? We are told, that a man and his wife are one flesh; this I can comprehend the meaning of; yet, literally taken, it is a thing impossible. But the apostle telleth us, *We see but in part, and we know but in part;*

68 S E R M O N III.

part ; and yet we would comprehend all the secret ways and workings of God.

THEREFORE I shall again repeat the doctrine of the Trinity, as it is positively affirmed in scripture. That God is there expressed in three different names, as Father, as Son, and as Holy Ghost ; that each of these is God, and that there is but one God. But this union and distinction is a mystery utterly unknown to mankind.

THIS is enough for any good Christian to believe on this great article, without ever enquiring any farther : and, this can be contrary to no man's reason, although the knowledge of it is hid from him.

BUT there is another difficulty of great importance, among those who
quarrel

quarrel with the doctrine of the Trinity, as well as with several other articles of Christianity; which is, that our religion aboundeth in mysteries, and these they are so bold to revile as cant, imposture, and priest-craft. It is impossible for us to determine for what reasons God thought fit to communicate some things to us in part, and leave some part in a mystery. But so it is in fact, and so the holy scripture telleth us in several places. For instance; the resurrection and change of our bodies are called mysteries by *St. Paul*; our Saviour's incarnation is another: the kingdom of God is called a mystery by our Saviour, to be only known to his disciples; so is faith, and the word of God by *St. Paul*: I omit many others. So, that to declare against all mysteries without distinction or exception,

70 S E R M O N III.

exception, is to declare against the whole tenor of the New Testament.

THERE are two conditions that may bring a mystery under suspicion. First, when it is not taught and commanded in holy writ; or, secondly, when the mystery turneth to the advantage of those who preach it to others. Now, as to the first, it can never be said, that we preach mysteries without warrant from holy scripture, although I confess this of the Trinity may have sometimes been explained by human invention, which might perhaps better have been spared. As to the second; it will not be possible to charge the protestant priesthood with proposing any temporal advantage to themselves by broaching, or multiplying, or preaching of mysteries. Does this myste-
ry

S E R M O N II. 71

ry of the Trinity, for instance, and the descent of the Holy Ghost, bring the least profit or power to the preachers? No; it is as great a mystery to themselves as it is to the meanest of their hearers; and may be rather a cause of humiliation, by putting their understanding in that point upon a level with the most ignorant of their flock. It is true indeed, the *Roman* church hath very much enriched herself by trading in mysteries, for which they have not the least authority from scripture, and were fitted only to advance their own temporal wealth and grandeur; such as *transubstantiation, worshipping of images, indulgences for sins, purgatory, and masses for the dead*; with many more: but, it is the perpetual talent of those who have ill-will to our church, or a contempt for all religion,

72 S E R M O N III.

religion, taken up by the wickedness of their lives, to charge us with the errors and corruptions of popery, which all protestants have thrown off near two hundred years : whereas those mysteries held by us, have no prospect of power, pomp, or wealth ; but have been ever maintained by the universal body of true believers from the days of the apostles, and will be so to the resurrection ; neither will the gates of hell prevail against them.

IT may be thought, perhaps, a strange thing, that God should require us to believe mysteries, while the reason or manner of what we are to believe, is above our comprehension, and wholly concealed from us : neither doth it appear at first sight, that the believing, or not believing

lieving them, doth concern either the glory of God, or contribute to the goodness or wickedness of our lives : but this is a great and dangerous mistake. We see what a mighty weight is laid upon faith, both in the Old and New Testament. In the former, we read how the faith of *Abraham* is praised, who could believe that God would raise from him a great nation, at the very same time that he was commanded to sacrifice his only son, and despaired of any other issue : and this was to him a great mystery. Our Saviour is perpetually preaching faith to his disciples, or reproaching them with the want of it ; and *St. Paul* produceth numerous examples of the wonders done by faith. And all this is highly reasonable ; for faith is an entire dependence upon the truth, the

74 S E R M O N III.

power, the justice, and the mercy of God; which dependence will certainly incline us to obey him in all things. So, that the great excellency of faith consisteth in the consequence it hath upon our actions: as, if we depend upon the truth and wisdom of man, we shall certainly be more disposed to follow his advice. Therefore, let no man think that he can lead as good a moral life without faith, as with it; for this reason, because he who has no faith, cannot, by the strength of his own reason or endeavour, so easily resist temptations, as the other who dependeth upon God's assistance in the overcoming his frailties, and is sure to be rewarded for ever in heaven, for his victory over them. *Faith, says the apostle, is the evidence of things not seen:* he means, that faith

is

is a virtue by which any thing commanded us by God to believe, appeareth evident and certain to us, although we do not see, nor can conceive it; because by faith, we entirely depend upon the truth and power of God.

It is an old and true distinction, that things may be above our reason without being contrary to it. Of this kind are the power, the nature, and the universal presence of God, with innumerable other points. How little do those who quarrel with mysteries know of the commonest actions of nature? The growth of an animal, of a plant, or of the smallest seed, is a mystery to the wisest among men. If an ignorant person were told that a load-stone would draw iron at a distance, he might say it was a thing

76 S E R M O N III.

contrary to his reason, and could not believe before he saw it with his eyes.

THE manner whereby the soul and body are united, and how they are distinguished, is wholly unaccountable to us. We see but one part, and yet we know we consist of two; and this is a mystery we cannot comprehend, any more than that of the Trinity.

FROM what hath been said, it is manifest, that God did never command us to believe, nor his ministers to preach, any doctrine which is contrary to the reason he hath pleased to endow us with; but for his own wise ends, has thought fit to conceal from us the nature of the thing he commands; thereby to try our faith and obedience, and increase our dependence upon him.

IT

S E R M O N III. 77

It is highly probable, that if God should please to reveal unto us this great mystery of the Trinity, or some other mysteries in our holy religion, we should not be able to understand them, unless he would at the same time think fit to bestow on us some new powers or faculties of the mind, which we want at present, and are reserved until the day of resurrection to life eternal. *For now, as the apostle saith, we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face.*

Thus, we see, the matter is brought to this issue; we must either believe what God directly commandeth us in holy scripture, or we must wholly reject the scripture, and the Christian religion which we pretend to profess: but this, I hope, is too desperate a step for any of us to make.

I HAVE already observed, that those who preach up the belief of the Trinity, or of any other mystery, cannot propose any temporal advantage to themselves by so doing. But this is not the case of those who oppose these doctrines. Do *they* lead better moral lives than a good Christian? Are *they* more just in their dealings? more chaste, or temperate, or charitable? Nothing at all of this; but on the contrary, their intent is to overthrow all religion, that they may gratify their vices without any reproach from the world, or their own conscience; and are zealous to bring over as many others as they can to their own opinions; because it is some kind of imaginary comfort, to have a multitude on their side.

THERE is no miracle mentioned
in

in holy writ, which if it were strictly examined, is not as much contrary to common reason, and as much a mystery as this doctrine of the Trinity; and therefore, we may with equal justice deny the truth of them all. For instance; it is against the laws of nature, that a human body should be able to walk upon the water, as *St. Peter* is recorded to have done; or that a dead carcase should be raised from the grave after three days, when it began to be corrupted; which those who understand anatomy will pronounce to be impossible by the common rules of nature and reason. Yet these miracles, and many others, are positively affirmed in the gospel; and these we must believe, or give up our holy religion to atheists and infidels.

80 S E R M O N III.

I SHALL NOW make a few inferences and observations from what hath been said.

First, It would be well, if people would not lay so much weight on their own reason in matters of religion, as to think every thing impossible and absurd which they cannot conceive. How often do we contradict the right rules of reason in the whole course of our lives! *Reason* itself is true and just, but the *reason* of every particular man is weak and wavering, perpetually swayed and turned by his interests, his passions, and his vices. Let any man but consider, when he hath a controversy with another, although his case be never so unjust, although the world be against him, how blinded he is by the love of himself, to believe

lieve that right is wrong, and wrong is right, when it maketh for his own advantage. Where is then the right use of his reason, which he so much boasteth of, and which he would blasphemously set up to controul the commands of the Almighty?

Secondly, WHEN men are tempted to deny the mysteries of religion, let them examine and search into their own hearts, whether they have not some favourite sin which is of their party in this dispute, and which is equally contrary to other commands of God in the gospel. For, why do men love darkness rather than light? The scripture telleth us, *Because their deeds are evil*; and there can be no other reason assigned. Therefore when men are curious and inquisitive to discover some weak

sides in Christianity, and inclined to favour every thing that is offered to its disadvantage; it is plain they wish it were not true, and those wishes can proceed from nothing but an evil conscience; because, if there be truth in our religion, their condition must be miserable.

AND, therefore, *thirdly*, men should consider, that raising difficulties concerning the mysteries in religion, cannot make them more wise, learned, or virtuous; better neighbours, or friends, or more serviceable to their country; but, whatever they pretend, will destroy their inward peace of mind, by perpetual doubts and fears arising in their breasts. And, God forbid we should ever see the times so bad, when dangerous opinions in religion, will be a means to
get

get favour and preferment; although even in such a case, it would be an ill traffic, to gain the world, and lose our own souls. So that, upon the whole, it will be impossible to find any real use towards a virtuous or happy life, by denying the mysteries of the gospel.

Fourthly, THOSE strong unbelievers, who expect that all mysteries should be squared and fitted to their own reason, might have somewhat to say for themselves, if they could satisfy the general reason of mankind in other opinions: but herein they are miserably defective, absurd, and ridiculous; they strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel; they can believe that the world was made by chance; that God doth not concern himself with things below; will neither pu-

84 S E R M O N III.

nish vice, nor reward virtue; that religion was invented by cunning men to keep the world in awe; with many other opinions equally false and detestable, against the common light of nature as well as reason; against the universal sentiments of all civilized nations, and offensive to the ears even of a sober heathen.

Lastly, SINCE the world aboundeth with pestilent books, particularly written against this doctrine of the Trinity; it is fit to inform you, that the authors of them proceed wholly upon a mistake: they would shew how impossible it is that *three* can be one, and *one* can be three; whereas the scripture saith no such thing, at least in the manner they would make it: but, only, that there is some kind of unity and distinction
in

in the divine nature, which mankind cannot possibly comprehend: thus, the whole doctrine is short and plain, and in itself incapable of any controversy; since God himself hath pronounced the fact, but wholly concealed the manner. And therefore, many divines who thought fit to answer those wicked books, have been mistaken too, by answering fools in their folly; and endeavouring to explain a mystery which God intended to keep secret from us. And, as I would exhort all men to avoid reading those wicked books, written against this doctrine, as dangerous and pernicious; so I think they may omit the answers as unnecessary. This I confess will probably affect but few or none among the generality of our congregations, who do not much trouble themselves with books

at

at least of this kind. However, many, who do not read themselves, are seduced by others that do; and thus become unbelievers upon trust and at second hand; and this is too frequent a case: for which reason I have endeavoured to put this doctrine upon a short and sure foot, levelled to the meanest understanding; by which we may, as the apostle directeth, be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh us a reason of the hope that is in us, with meekness and fear.

AND, thus I have done with my subject, which probably I should not have chosen, if I had not been invited to it by the occasion of this season, appointed on purpose to celebrate the mysteries of the Trinity, and the descent of the Holy Ghost, wherein

wherein we pray to be kept stedfast in this faith ; and what this faith is, I have shewn you in the plainest manner I could. For, upon the whole, it is no more than this: God commandeth us, by our dependence upon his truth and his holy word, to believe a fact that we do not understand. And this is no more than what we do every day in the works of nature, upon the credit of men of learning. Without faith we can do no works acceptable to God ; for, if they proceed from any other principle, they will not advance our salvation ; and this faith, as I have explained it, we may acquire, without giving up our senses, or contradicting our reason. May God of his infinite mercy, inspire us with true faith in every article and mystery of our holy religion, so as to dispose us
to

88 S E R M O N. III.

to do what is pleasing in his sight;
and this we pray through Jesus Christ,
to whom, with the Father, and the
Holy Ghost, the myſterious, incom-
prehenſible ONE God, be all honour
and glory, now and for evermore.
Amen.

S E R-

S E R M O N IV.

T H E
D I F F I C U L T Y
O F
K N O W I N G O N E ' S S E L F .

THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

ASTEN LENOX TILDEN FOUNDATION

500 FIFTH AVENUE NEW YORK 17, N. Y.

DATE OF ACQUISITION

SEP 10 1914

THE

DIFFICULTY

OF

KNOWING ONE'S SELF

S E R M O N IV.

2 KINGS viii. Part of the 13th verse.

And Hazael said, But what, is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?

WE have a very signal instance of the deceitfulness of the heart, represented to us in the person of *Hazael*; who was sent to the prophet *Elisha*, to enquire of the Lord, concerning his master the king of *Syria's* recovery. For the man of God having told him that the king might recover from the disorder he was then labouring under, began to set and fasten his countenance upon him.

92 S E R M O N IV.

him of a sudden, and to break out into the most violent expressions of sorrow, and a deep concern for it; whereupon, when *Hazael*, full of shame and confusion, asked, *Why weepeth my Lord?* he answered, *Because I know all the evil that thou wilt do unto the children of Israel; their strong holds wilt thou set on fire, and their young men wilt thou slay with the sword, and wilt dash their children, and rip up their women with child.* Thus much did the man of God say and know of him, by a light darted into his mind from heaven. But *Hazael*, not knowing himself so well as the other did, was startled and amazed at the relation, and would not believe it possible, that a man of his temper could ever run out into such enormous instances of cruelty and inhumanity. *What, says*
he,

S E R M O N IV. 93

he, is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?

AND yet, for all this, it is highly probable, that he was then that very man he could not imagine himself to be; for we find him, on the very next day after his return, in a very treacherous and disloyal manner, murdering his own master, and usurping his kingdom; which was but a prologue to the sad tragedy, which he afterwards acted upon the people of *Israel*.

AND now the case is but very little better with most men, than it was with *Hazael*; however it cometh to pass, they are wonderfully unacquainted with their own temper and disposition, and know very little of what passeth within them:

for,

94 S E R M O N IV.

for, of so many proud, ambitious, revengeful, envying, and ill-natured persons that are in the world, where is there one of them, who, although he hath all the symptoms of the vice appearing upon every occasion, can look with such an impartial eye upon himself, as to believe that the imputation thrown upon him is not altogether groundless and unfair? Who, if he were told by men of a discerning spirit and a strong conjecture, of all the evil and absurd things which that false heart of his would at one time or other betray him into, would not believe as little, and wonder as much, as *Hazael* did before him? Thus, for instance; tell an angry person, that he is weak and impotent, and of no consistency of mind; tell him, that such or such a little accident, which he may then despise,

and

S E R M O N IV. 95

and think much below a passion, shall hereafter make him say and do several absurd, indiscreet, and misbecoming things: he may perhaps own that he hath a spirit of resentment within him, that will not let him be imposed on, but he fondly imagines, that he can lay a becoming restraint upon it when he pleaseth, although it is ever running away with him into some indecency or other.

THEREFORE, to bring down the words of my text to our present occasion, I shall endeavour, in a further prosecution of them, to evince the great necessity of a nice and curious inspection into the several recesses of the heart, that being the surest and the shortest method that a wicked man can take to reform himself: for let us but stop the fountain,
and

96 S E R M O N IV.

and the streams will spend and waste themselves away in a very little time ; but if we go about, like children, to raise a bank, and to stop the current, not taking notice all the while of the spring which continually feedeth it, when the next flood of a temptation riseth and breaketh in upon it, then we shall find that we have begun at the wrong end of our duty, and that we are very little more the better for it, than if we had sat still, and made no advances at all.

BUT, in order to a clearer explanation of the point, I shall speak to these following particulars.

First, By endeavouring to prove,
from particular instances, that
man is generally the most ignorant

norant creature in the world of himself.

Secondly, By enquiring into the grounds and reasons of this ignorance.

Thirdly, and *lastly*, By proposing several advantages, that *do most assuredly* attend a due improvement in the knowledge of ourselves.

First, then, To prove that man is generally the most ignorant creature in the world of himself.

To pursue the heart of man through all the instances of life, in all its several windings and turnings, and under that infinite variety of shapes and appearances which it put-

98 S E R M O N IV.

teth on, would be a difficult and almost impossible undertaking; so that I shall confine myself to such as have a nearer reference to the present occasion, and do, upon a closer view, shew themselves through the whole business of repentance. For we all know what it is to repent, but whether he repenteth him truly of his sins or not, who can know it?

Now the great duty of repentance is chiefly made up of these two parts, a hearty sorrow for the follies and miscarriages of the time past, and a full purpose and resolution of amendment for the time to come. And now, to shew the falseness of the heart in both these parts of repentance. And,

FIRST, As to a hearty sorrow for, the

S E R M O N IV. 99

the sins and miscarriages of the time past. Is there a more usual thing than for a man to impose upon himself, by putting on a grave and demure countenance, by casting a severe look into his past conduct, and making some few pious and devout reflections upon it, and then to believe that he hath repented to an excellent purpose, without ever letting it step forth into practice, and shew itself in a holy conversation? Nay, some persons do carry the deceit a little higher; who, if they can but bring themselves to weep for their sins, are then full of an ill-grounded confidence and security; never considering, that all this may prove to be no more than the very garb and outward dress of a contrite heart, which another heart, as hard as the nether mill-stone, may as

100 S E R M O N IV.

well put on. For tears and sighs, however in some persons they may be decent and commendable expressions of a godly sorrow, are neither necessary, nor infallible signs of a true and unfeigned repentance. Not necessary, because sometimes, and in some persons, the inward grief and anguish of the mind may be too big to be expressed by so little a thing as a tear, and then it turneth its edge inwards upon the mind; and like those wounds of the body which bleed inwardly, it generally proves the most fatal and dangerous to the whole body of sin: not infallible, because a very small portion of sorrow may make some tender dispositions melt, and break out into tears; or a man may perhaps weep at parting with his sins, as he would to bid the last farewell to an old

old friend that he was sure never to see again.

BUT there is still a more pleasant cheat in this affair, that when we find a deadness, and a strange kind of unaptness and indisposition to all impressions of religion, and that we cannot be as truly sorry for our sins as we should be, we then pretend to be sorry that we are not more sorry for them; which is not less absurd and irrational, than that a man should pretend to be very angry at a thing, because he did not know how to be angry at all.

BUT after all, what is wanting in this part of repentance, we expect to make it up in the next; and to that purpose we put on a resolution of amendment, which we take to

102 S E R M O N IV.

be as firm as a house built upon a rock; so that let the floods arise, and the winds blow, and the streams beat vehemently upon it, nothing shall shake it into ruin and disorder. We doubt not, upon the strength of this resolve, to stand fast and unmoved amidst the storm of a temptation; and do firmly believe, at the time we make it, that nothing in the world will ever be able to make us commit those sins over again, which we have so firmly resolved against.

Thus many a time have we come to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, with a full purpose of amendment, and with as full a persuasion of putting that same purpose into practice; and yet have we not all as often broke that good purpose, and

and falsified that same persuasion, by starting aside, like a broken bow, into those very sins, which we then so solemnly and so confidently declared against?

WHEREAS, had but any other person entered with us into a vow so solemn, that he had taken the holy sacrament upon it, I believe had he but once deceived us by breaking in upon the vow, we should hardly ever after be prevailed upon to trust that man again, although we still continue to trust our own hearts, against reason and against experience.

THIS indeed is a dangerous deceit enough, and will of course betray all those well-meaning persons into sin and folly, who are apt to take religion for a much easier thing

104 S E R M O N IV.

than it is. But this is not the only mistake we are apt to run into; we do not only think sometimes that we can do more than we can do, but sometimes that we are incapable of doing less; an error of another kind indeed, but not less dangerous, arising from a diffidence and false humility. For how much a wicked man can do in the business of religion, if he would but do his best, is very often more than he can tell.

Thus nothing is more common than to see a wicked man running headlong into sin and folly against his reason, against his religion, and against his God. Tell him, that what he is going to do will be an infinite disparagement to his understanding, which, at another time, he setteth no small value upon; tell him

him that it will blacken his reputation, which he had rather die for than lose; tell him that the pleasure of the sin is short and transient, and leaveth a vexatious kind of a sting behind it, which will very hardly be drawn forth; tell him that this is one of those things for which God will most surely bring him to judgment, which he pretendeth to believe with a full assurance and perswasion: and yet for all this, he shutteth his eyes against all conviction, and rusheth into the sin, like a horse into the battle; as if he had nothing left to do, but like a filly child to wink hard, and to think to escape a certain and an infinite mischief, only by endeavouring not to see it.

AND now to shew that the heart hath given in a false report of the

Job E 5 temptation,

106 S E R M O N IV.

temptation, we may learn from this, that the same weak man would resist and master the same powerful temptation, upon considerations of infinitely less value, than those which religion offereth, nay, such vile considerations, that the grace of God cannot without blasphemy be supposed to add any manner of force and efficacy to them. Thus for instance, it would be an hard matter to dress up a sin in such soft and tempting circumstances, that a truly covetous man would not resist for a considerable sum of money; when neither the hopes of heaven nor the fears of hell could make an impression on him before. But can any thing be a surer indication of the deceitfulness of the heart, than thus to shew more courage, resolution, and activity, in an ill cause, than it doth

doth in a good one? and to exert itself to better purpose, when it is to serve its own pride, or lust, or revenge, or any other passion, than when it is to serve God upon the motives of the gospel, and upon all the arguments that have ever been made use of to bring men over to religion and a good life? And thus having shewn that a man is wonderfully apt to deceive and impose upon himself, in passing through the several stages of that great duty, repentance, I proceed now, in the

SECOND place, To enquire into the grounds and reasons of this ignorance, *and to shew whence it cometh to pass, that a man, the only creature in the world that can reflect and look into himself, should know so little of what passeth within him, and be so ve-*

108 S E R M O N IV.

ry much unacquainted even with the standing dispositions and complexion of his own heart. The prime reason of it is, because we so very seldom converse with ourselves, and take so little notice of what passeth within us: for a man can no more know his own heart than he can know his own face, any other way than by reflection: he may as well tell over every feature of the smaller portions of his face without the help of a looking glass, as he can tell all the inward bents and tendencies of the soul, those standing features and lineaments of the inward man, and know all the various changes that this is liable to from custom, from passion, and from opinion, without a very frequent use of looking within himself.

FOR

FOR our passions and inclinations are not always upon the wing, and always moving towards their respective objects, but retire now and then into the more dark and hidden recesses of the heart, where they lie concealed for a while, until a fresh occasion calls them forth again: so that not every transient, oblique, glance upon the mind can bring a man into a thorough knowledge of all its strengths and weaknesses; for a man may sometimes turn the eye of the mind inward upon itself, as he may behold his natural face in a glass, and go away, and straight forget what manner of man he was. But a man must rather sit down and unravel every action of the past day into all its circumstances and particularities, and observe how every little thing moved and affected him,
and

110 S E R M O N IV.

and what manner of impressi^on it made upon his heart: this done with that frequency and carefulness which the importance of the duty doth require, would in a short time bring him into a near and intimate acquaintance with himself.

BUT when men instead of this, do pass away months and years in a perfect slumber of the mind, without once awaking it, it is no wonder they should be so very ignorant of themselves, and know very little more of what passeth within them, than the very beasts which perish. But here it may not be amiss to enquire into the reasons why most men have so little conversation with themselves.

AND 1st, Because this reflection
is

S E R M O N IV. 111

is a work and labour of the mind, and cannot be performed without some pain and difficulty: for before a man can reflect upon himself, and look into his heart with a steady eye, he must contract his sight, and collect all his scattered and roving thoughts into some order and compass, that he may be able to take a clear and distinct view of them; he must retire from the world for a while, and be unattentive to all impressions of sense; and how hard and painful a thing must it needs be to a man of passion and infirmity, amidst such a croud of objects that are continually striking upon the sense, and soliciting the affections, not to be moved and interrupted by one or other of them! But,

2dly, ANOTHER reason why we
fo

112 S E R M O N IV.

so seldom converse with ourselves, is, because the business of the world taketh up all our time, and leaveth us no portion of it to spend upon this great work and labour of the mind. Thus twelve or fourteen years pass away before we can well discern good from evil; and of the rest so much goeth away in sleep, so much in the ordinary business of life, and so much in the proper business of our callings, that we have none to lay out upon the more serious and religious employments. Every man's life is an imperfect sort of a circle, which he repeateth and runneth over every day; he hath a set of thoughts, desires, and inclinations, which return upon him in their proper time and order, and will very hardly be laid aside to make room for any thing new and uncommon:

S E R M O N IV. 113

uncommon: so that call upon him when you please, to set about the study of his own heart, and you are sure to find him pre-engaged; either he hath some business to do, or some diversion to take, some acquaintance that he must visit, or some company that he must entertain, or some cross accident hath put him out of humour, and unfitted him for such a grave employment. And thus it cometh to pass, that a man can never find leisure to look into himself, because he doth not set apart some portion of the day for that very purpose, but foolishly deferreth it from one day to another, until his glass is almost run out, and he is called upon to give a miserable account of himself in the other world. But,

3^{dly},

114 S E R M O N IV.

3dly, ANOTHER reason why a man doth not more frequently converse with himself, is, because such a conversation with his own heart may discover some vice or infirmity lurking within him, which he is very unwilling to believe himself guilty of. For, can there be a more ungrateful thing to a man, than to find that upon a nearer view, he is not that person he took himself to be? That he hath neither the courage, nor the honesty, nor the piety, nor the humility, that he dreamt he had? That a very little pain, for instance, putteth him out of patience, and as little pleasure, softeneth and disarmeth him into ease and wantonness? That he hath been at more pains, and labour, and cost, to be revenged of an enemy, than to oblige the best friend he hath
in.

in the world? That he cannot bring himself to say his prayers without a great deal of reluctancy; and when he doth say them, the spirit and fervour of devotion evaporate in a very short time, and he can scarcely hold out a prayer of ten lines, without a number of idle and impertinent, if not vain and wicked thoughts coming into his head? These are very unwelcome discoveries that a man may make of himself; so that it is no wonder that every one, who is already flushed with a good opinion of himself, should rather study how to run away from it, than how to converse with his own heart.

BUT further. If a man were both able and willing to retire into his own heart, and to set apart some portion

portion of the day for that very purpose; yet he is still disabled from passing a fair and impartial judgment upon himself, by several difficulties, arising partly from prejudice and prepossession, partly from the lower appetites and inclinations. And,

First, THAT the business of prepossession may lead and betray a man into a false judgment of his own heart. For we may observe, that the first opinion we take up of any thing, or any person, doth generally stick close to us; the nature of the mind being such, that it cannot but desire, and consequently endeavour to have some certain principles to go upon, something fixed and unmoveable, whereon it may rest and support itself. And hence it cometh to pass, that some persons
are

S E R M O N IV. 117

are with so much difficulty brought to think well of a man they have once entertained an ill opinion of; and perhaps, that too, for a very absurd and unwarrantable reason. But how much more difficult then, must it be for a man, who taketh up a fond opinion of his own heart, long before he hath either years or sense enough to understand it, either to be persuaded out of it by himself, whom he loveth so well; or by another, whose interest or diversion it may be to make him ashamed of himself! Then,

Secondly, As to the difficulties arising from the inferior appetites and inclinations, let any man look into his own heart, and observe in how different a light, and under what different complexions any two sins
of

148 S E R M O N IV.

of equal turpitude and malignity do appear to him, if he hath but a strong inclination to the one, and none at all to the other. That which he hath an inclination to, is always dressed up in all the false beauty that a fond and busy imagination can give it; the other appeareth naked and deformed, and in all the true circumstances of folly and dishonour. Thus, stealing is a vice that few gentlemen are inclined to; and they justly think it below the dignity of a man, to stoop to so base and low a sin; but no principle of honour, no workings of the mind and conscience, not the still voice of mercy, not the dreadful call of judgment, nor any considerations whatever, can put a stop to that violence and oppression, that pride and ambition, that revelling
and

S E R M O N IV. 119

and wantonness, which we every day meet with in the world. Nay, it is easy to observe very different thoughts in a man, of the sin that he is most fond of, according to the different ebbs and flows of his inclination to it. For, as soon as the appetite is alarmed, and seizeth upon the heart, a little cloud gathereth about the head, and spreadeth a kind of darkness over the face of the soul, whereby it is hindered from taking a clear and distinct view of things; but no sooner is the appetite tired and satiated, but the same cloud passeth away like a shadow, and a new light springing up in the mind of a sudden, the man seeth much more, both of the folly, and of the danger of the sin, than he did before.

AND

AND thus having done with the several reasons why man, the only creature in the world that can reflect and look into himself, is so very ignorant of what passeth within him, and so much unacquainted with the standing dispositions and complexions of his own heart: I proceed now, in the

Third and last place, to lay down several advantages, that do *most assuredly* attend a due improvement in the knowledge of ourselves. And,

First, ONE great advantage is, that it tendeth very much to mortify and humble a man into a modest and low opinion of himself. For, let a man take a nice and curious inspection into all the several regions of the heart, and observe every thing irregular and amiss within

in him; for instance, how narrow and short-sighted a thing is the understanding! upon how little reason do we take up an opinion, and upon how much less sometimes do we lay it down again! how weak and false ground do we often walk upon with the biggest confidence and assurance, and how tremulous and doubtful we are very often, where no doubt is to be made! Again; how wild and impertinent, how busy and incoherent a thing is the imagination, even in the best and wisest men! inasmuch, that every man may be said to be mad, but every man doth not shew it. Then as to the passions; how noisy, how turbulent, and how tumultuous are they! how easily are they stirred and set a going, how eager and hot in the pursuit, and what strange dis-

order and confusion do they throw a man into! so that he can neither think, nor speak, nor act, as he should do, while he is under the dominion of any one of them.

THUS, let every man look with a severe and impartial eye into all the distinct regions of the heart, and, no doubt, several deformities and irregularities, that he never thought of, will open and disclose themselves upon so near a view; and rather make the man ashamed of himself, than proud.

Secondly, A due improvement in the knowledge of ourselves, doth certainly secure us from the sly and insinuating assaults of flattery. There is not in the world a baser, and more hateful thing than flattery; it proceedeth

ceedeth from so much falseness and insincerity in the man that giveth it, and often discovereth so much weakness and folly in the man that taketh it, that it is hard to tell which of the two is most to be blamed. Every man of common sense can demonstrate in speculation, and may be fully convinced, that all the praises and commendations of the whole world can add no more to the real and intrinsic value of a man, than they can add to his stature. And yet, for all this, men of the best sense and piety, when they come down to the practice, cannot forbear thinking much better of themselves, when they have the good fortune to be spoken well of by other persons.

— But the meaning of this absurd
 F 2 proceeding

124 S E R M O N IV.

proceeding seemeth to be no other than this; there are few men that have so intimate an acquaintance with their own heart, as to know their own real worth, and how to set a just rate upon themselves, and therefore they do not know but that he who praises them most, may be most in the right of it. For, no doubt, if a man were ignorant of the true value of a thing he loved as well as himself, he would measure the worth of it according to the esteem of him who biddeth most for it, rather than of him that biddeth less.

THEREFORE, the most infallible way to disintangle a man from the snares of flattery, is to consult and study his own heart; for whoever does

does that well, will hardly be so absurd, as to take another man's word before his own sense and experience.

Thirdly, ANOTHER advantage from this kind of study, is this, that it teacheth a man, how to behave himself patiently, when he has the ill-fortune to be censured and abused by other people. For a man, who is thoroughly acquainted with his own heart, doth already know much more evil of himself, than any-body else can tell him; and when any one speaketh ill of him, he rather thanketh God, that he can say no worse. For, could his enemy but look into the dark and hidden recesses of the heart, he considereth what a number of impure thoughts he might there see brooding and hovering

126 S E R M O N IV.

vering like a dark cloud upon the face of the soul; that there he might take a prospect of the fancy, and view it acting over the several scenes of pride, of ambition, of envy, of lust, and revenge; that there he might tell how often a vicious inclination hath been restrained, for no other reason, but just to save the man's credit or interest in the world; and how many unbecoming ingredients have entered into the composition of his best actions. And now, what man in the whole world would be able to bear so severe a test, to have every thought and inward motion of the heart laid open and exposed to the views of his enemies? But,

Fourthly, and lastly; ANOTHER advantage of this kind is, that it maketh

maketh men less severe upon other people's faults, and less busy and industrious in spreading them. For a man, employed at home, inspecting into his own failings, hath not leisure enough to take notice of every little spot and blemish that lieth scattered upon others: or, if he cannot escape the sight of them, he always passes the most easy and favourable construction upon them. Thus, for instance; does the ill he knoweth of a man proceed from an unhappy temper and constitution of body? He then considereth with himself, how hard a thing it is, not to be borne down with the current of the blood and spirits, and accordingly layeth some part of the blame upon the weakness of human nature, for he hath felt the force and rapidity of it within his own

128 S E R M O N IV.

breast; although perhaps, in another instance, he remembereth how it rageth and swelleth by opposition; and although it may be restrained, or diverted, for a while, yet it can hardly ever be totally subdued.

OR, has the man sinned out of custom? he then, from his own experience, traceth an habit into the very first rise and imperfect beginnings of it; and can tell by how slow and insensible advances it creepeth upon the heart; how it worketh itself by degrees into the very frame and texture of it, and so passeth into a second nature; and consequently he hath a just sense of the great difficulty for him to learn to do good, who hath been long accustomed to do evil.

OR,

OR, *lastly*, Hath a false opinion betrayed him into a sin? He then calleth to mind what wrong apprehensions he hath had of some things himself; how many opinions, that he once made no doubt of, he hath; upon a stricter examination, found to be doubtful and uncertain; how many more to be unreasonable and absurd. He knoweth further, that there are a great many more opinions that he hath never yet examined into at all, and which, however, he still believeth, for no other reason, but because he hath believed them so long already without a reason. Thus, upon every occasion, a man, intimately acquainted with himself, consulteth his own heart, and maketh every man's case to be his own (and so puts the most favourable interpretation upon it.)

130 S E R M O N IV.

Let every man therefore look into his own heart, before he beginneth to abuse the reputation of another, and then he will hardly be so absurd, as to throw a dart that will so certainly rebound and wound himself. And thus, through the whole course of his conversation, let him keep an eye upon that one great and comprehensive rule of Christian duty, on which hangeth not only the law and the prophets, but the very life and spirit of the gospel too; *Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them.* Which rule, that we may all duly observe, by throwing aside all scandal and detraction, all spite and rancour, all rudeness and contempt, all rage and violence, and whatever tendeth to make conversation and commerce either uneasy, or troublesome, may the

S E R M O N IV. 131

the God of peace grant for Jesus
Christ his sake, *etc.*

CONSIDER what hath been said,
and the Lord give you a right un-
derstanding in all things. To
whom, with the Son and the Holy
Ghost, be all honour and glory, now
and for ever.

2. BOOK TWO - IV

the first part of the book
the second part of the book
the third part of the book
the fourth part of the book
the fifth part of the book
the sixth part of the book
the seventh part of the book
the eighth part of the book
the ninth part of the book
the tenth part of the book

3. BOOK THREE - I

the first part of the book

the second part of the book
the third part of the book
the fourth part of the book
the fifth part of the book
the sixth part of the book
the seventh part of the book
the eighth part of the book
the ninth part of the book
the tenth part of the book

S E R M O N V.

O N

F A L S E W I T N E S S.

W. O. N. V.

TABLE WITNESSES

S E R M O N V.

EXODUS XX. 16.

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.

IN those great changes that are made in a country, by the prevailing of one party over another, it is very convenient that the prince, and those who are in authority under him, should use all just and proper methods for preventing any mischief to the public from seditious men. And Governors do well, when they encourage any good subject to discover (as his duty obligeth him) whatever plots or conspiracies

136 S E R M O N V.

racies may be any way dangerous to the state : Neither are they to be blamed, even when they receive informations from bad men, in order to find out the truth, when it concerns the public welfare. Every one indeed is naturally inclined to have an ill opinion of an informer ; although it is not impossible, but an honest man may be called by that name. For whoever knoweth any thing, the telling of which would prevent some great evil to his prince, his country, or his neighbour, is bound in conscience to reveal it. But the mischief is, that when parties are violently enflamed, which seemeth unfortunately to be our case at present, there is never wanting a set of evil instruments, who either out of mad zeal, private hatred, or filthy lucre, are always ready

dy to offer their service to the prevailing side, and become accusers of their brethren without any regard to truth or charity. Holy *David* numbers this among the chief of his sufferings; *False witnesses are risen up against me, and such as breathe out cruelty* *. Our Saviour and his apostles did likewise undergo the same distress, as we read both in the gospels and the acts.

Now because the sin of false witnessing is so horrible and dangerous in itself, and so odious to God and man: And because the bitterness of too many among us is risen to such a height, that it is not easy to know where it will stop, or how far some weak and wicked minds may be carried by a mistaken zeal, a malicious temper,

* Psal. xxvii. 12.

138 S E R M O N V.

temper, or hope of reward, to break this great commandment delivered in the text: Therefore, in order to prevent this evil, and the consequences of it, at least among you who are my hearers, I shall,

I. FIRST, Shew you several ways by which a man may be called a false witness against his neighbour.

II. SECONDLY, I shall give you some rules for your conduct and behaviour, in order to defend yourselves against the malice and cunning of false accusers.

III. AND lastly, I shall conclude with shewing you very briefly, how far it is your duty,
as.

as good subjects and good neighbours, to bear faithful witness, when you are lawfully called to it by those in authority, or by the sincere advice of your own consciences.

I. As to the first, there are several ways by which a man may be justly called a false witness against his neighbour.

First, ACCORDING to the direct meaning of the word, when a man accuseth his neighbour without the least ground of truth. So we read, *that Jezabel hired two sons of Belial to accuse Naboth for blaspheming God and the King, for which, although he was entirely innocent, he was stoned to death* *. And in our age it is not
easy

* 1 Kings xxi. 13.

140 S E R M O N V.

easy to tell how many men have lost their lives, been ruined in their fortunes, and put to ignominious punishment by the downright perjury of false witnesses! The law itself in such cases being not able to protect the innocent. But this is so horrible a crime, that it doth not need to be aggravated by words.

A SECOND way by which a man becometh a false witness is, when he mixeth falsehood and truth together, or concealeth some circumstances, which, if they were told, would destroy the falsehoods he uttereth. So the two false witnesses who accused our Saviour before the chief priests, by a very little perverting his words, would have made him guilty of a capital crime; for so it was among the Jews to prophesy

fy any evil against the temple. *This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days* *; whereas the words, as our Saviour spoke them, were to another end, and differently expressed: For when the Jews asked him to shew them a sign, he said; *Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.* In such cases as these, an innocent man is half confounded, and looketh as if he were guilty, since he neither can deny his words, nor perhaps readily strip them from the malicious additions of a false witness.

Thirdly, A MAN is a false witness, when, in accusing his neighbour, he endeavoureth to aggravate by his gestures, and tone of his voice, or
when

* Mat. xxvi. 6.

when he chargeth a man with words which were only repeated or quoted from somebody else. As if any one should tell me that he heard another speak certain dangerous and seditious speeches, and I should immediately accuse him for speaking them himself; and so drop the only circumstance that made him innocent. This was the case of St. Stephen. The false witnesses said, *This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place and the law* *. Whereas St. Stephen said no such words; but only repeated some prophecies of *Jeremiah* or *Malachi*, which threatened *Jerusalem* with destruction if it did not repent: However, by the fury of the people this innocent holy person was stoned to death for words he never spoke.

Fourthly,

* Acts vi. 13.

Fourthly, THE blackest kind of false witnesses are those who do the office of the devil, by tempting their brethren in order to betray them. I cannot call to mind any instances of this kind mentioned in holy scripture. But I am afraid, this vile practice hath been too much followed in the world. When a man's temper hath been so soured by misfortunes and hard usage, that perhaps he hath reason enough to complain; then one of these seducers, under the pretence of friendship, will seem to lament his case, urge the hardships he hath suffered, and endeavour to raise his passions until he hath said something that a malicious informer can pervert or aggravate against him in a court of justice.

Fifthly,

Fifthly, WHOEVER beareth witness against his neighbour, out of a principle of malice and revenge, from any old grudge, or hatred to his person; such a man is a false witness in the sight of God, although what he says be true; because the motive or cause is evil, not to serve his prince or country, but to gratify his own resentments. And therefore, although a man thus accused may be very justly punished by the law, yet this doth by no means acquit the accuser, who, instead of regarding the public service, intended only to glut his private rage and spight.

Sixthly, I number among false witnesses all those who make a trade of being informers in hope of favour and reward; and to this end employ
their

their time, either by listening in public places, to catch up an accidental word; or in corrupting men's servants to discover any unwary expression of their master; or thrusting themselves into company, and then using the most indecent scurrilous language; fastening a thousand falsehoods and scandal upon a whole party, on purpose to provoke such an answer as they may turn to an accusation. And truly this ungodly race is said to be grown so numerous, that men of different parties can hardly converse together with any security. Even the pulpit hath not been free from the misrepresentations of these informers; of whom the clergy have not wanted occasions to complain with holy *David*: *They daily mistake my words, all they imagine is to do me evil.* Nor is it any

wonder at all, that this trade of informing should be now in a flourishing condition, since our case is manifestly thus; we are divided into two parties, with very little charity or temper towards each other: The prevailing side may talk of past things as they please, with security; and generally do it in the most provoking words they can invent; while those who are down are sometimes tempted to speak in favour of a lost cause, and therefore, without great caution, must needs be often caught tripping, and thereby furnish plenty of materials for witnesses and informers.

Lastly, THOSE may well be reckoned among false witnesses against their neighbour, who bring him into trouble and punishment by such accusations

S E R M O N V. 147

accusations as are of no consequence at all to the public, nor can be of any other use but to create vexation. Such witnesses are those, who cannot hear an idle intemperate expression, but they must immediately run to the magistrate to inform; or perhaps wrangling in their cups over night, when they were not able to speak or apprehend three words of common sense, will pretend to remember every thing in the morning, and think themselves very properly qualified to be accusers of their brethren. God be thanked, the throne of our † king is too firmly settled to be shaken by the folly and rashness of every sottish companion. And I do not in the least doubt, that when those in power begin to

G 2 observe

† GEORGE I.

observe the falsehood, the prevarication, the aggravating manner, the treachery and seducing, the malice and revenge, the love of lucre; and lastly, the trifling accusations in too many wicked people, they will be as ready to discourage every sort of those whom I have numbered among false witnesses, as they will be to countenance honest men, who, out of a true zeal to their prince and country, do, in the innocence of their hearts, freely discover whatever they may apprehend to be dangerous to either. A good christian will think it sufficient to reprove his brother for a rash unguarded word, where there is neither danger nor evil example to be apprehended; or, if he will not amend by reproof, avoid his conversation.

II. AND

II. AND thus much may serve to shew the several ways whereby a man may be said to be a false witness against his neighbour. I might have added one kind more, and it is of those who inform against their neighbour out of fear of punishment to themselves, which, although it be more excusable, and hath less of malice than any of the rest, cannot however be justified. I go on therefore upon the second head, to give you some rules for your conduct and behaviour, in order to defend yourselves against the malice and cunning of false accusers.

It is readily agreed, that innocence is the best protection in the world; yet that it is not always sufficient without some degree of prudence, our Saviour himself intima-

150 S E R M O N V.

teth to us, by instructing his disciples *to be wise as serpents, as well as innocent as doves*. But, if ever innocence be too weak a defence, it is chiefly so in jealous and suspicious times, when factions are arrived to an high pitch of animosity, and the minds of men, instead of being warmed by a true zeal for religion, are inflamed only by party fury. Neither is virtue itself a sufficient security in such times, because it is not allowed to be virtue, otherwise than as it hath a mixture of party.

HOWEVER, although virtue and innocence are no infallible defence against perjury, malice, and subornation, yet they are great supports for enabling us to bear those evils with temper and resignation; and it is an unspeakable comfort to a
good

S E R M O N V. 151

good man under the malignity of evil mercenary tongues, that a few years will carry his appeal to an higher tribunal, where false witnesses, instead of daring to bring accusations before an all-seeing Judge, will call for mountains to cover them. As for earthly judges, they seldom have it in their power; and, God knows, whether they have it in their will, to mingle mercy with justice; they are so far from knowing the hearts of the accuser or the accused, that they cannot know their own; and their understanding is frequently biaſſed, although their intentions be just. They are often prejudiced to causes, parties, and persons, through the infirmity of human nature, without being sensible themselves that they are so: And therefore, although God may pardon

152 S E R M O N V.

their errors here, he certainly will not ratify their sentences hereafter.

HOWEVER, since as we have before observed, our Saviour prescribeth to us to be not only harmless as doves, but wise as serpents ; give me leave to prescribe to you some rules, which the most ignorant person may follow for the conduct of his life with safety in perilous times against false accusers.

1st, LET me advise you to have nothing at all to do with that which is commonly called politics, or the government of the world ; in the nature of which it is certain you are utterly ignorant, and when your opinion is wrong, although it proceeds from ignorance, it shall be an accusation against you. Besides, o-
pinions

S E R M O N V. 153

pinions in government are right or wrong just according to the humour and disposition of the times; and, unless you have judgment to distinguish, you may be punished at one time for what you would be rewarded in another.

2dly, BE ready at all times in your words and actions to shew your loyalty to the king that reigns over you. This is the plain manifest doctrine of holy scripture. *Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether it be to the king as supreme, &c **. And another apostle telleth us, *The powers that be are ordained of God*. Kings are the ordinances of man, by the permission of God, and they are ordained of God by his instrument, man. The

G 5

powers

* 1 Pet. ii. 13.

154 S E R M O N V.

powers that be, the present powers, which are ordained by God, and yet in some sense are the ordinances of man, are what you must obey, without presuming to examine into rights and titles; neither can it be reasonably expected, that the powers in being, or in possession, should suffer their title to be publicly disputed by subjects without severe punishment. And to say the truth, there is no duty in religion more easy to the generality of mankind, than obedience to government: I say, to the generality of mankind; because while their law, and property, and religion are preserved; it is of no great consequence to them by whom they are governed, and therefore they are under no temptation to desire a change.

3dly,

3dly, IN order to prevent any danger from the malice of false witnesses, be sure to avoid intemperance. If it be often so hard for men to govern their tongues when they are in their right senses, how can they hope to do it when they are heated with drink? In those cases most men regard not what they say, and too many not what they swear; neither will a man's memory disordered with drunkenness serve to defend himself, or satisfy him whether he were guilty or no.

4thly, AVOID, as much as possible, the conversation of those people, who are given to talk of public persons and affairs, especially of those whose opinions in such matters are different from yours. I never once knew any disputes of this kind ma-

156 S E R M O N V.

naged with tolerable temper; but on both sides they only agree as much as possible to provoke the passions of each other, indeed with this disadvantage, that he who argueth on the side of power may speak securely the utmost his malice can invent; while the other lieth every moment at the mercy of an informer; and the law in these cases will give no allowance at all for passion, inadvertency, or the highest provocation.

I COME now in the last place to shew you how far it is your duty as good subjects and good neighbours to bear faithful witness, when you are lawfully called to it by those in authority, or by the sincere advice of your own consciences.

IN

S E R M O N V. 157

IN what I have hitherto said, you easily find, that I do not talk of bearing witness in general, which is and may be lawful upon a thousand accounts in relation to property and other matters, and wherein there are many scandalous corruptions, almost peculiar to this country, which would require to be handled by themselves. But I have confined my discourse only to that branch of bearing false witness, whereby the public is injured in the safety or honour of the prince, or those in authority under him.

IN order therefore to be a faithful witness, it is first necessary that a man doth not undertake it from the least prospect of any private advantage to himself. The smallest mixture of that leaven will sour the whole

158 S E R M O N V.

whole lump. Interest will infallibly bias his judgment, although he be ever so firmly resolved to say nothing but truth. He cannot serve God and Mammon; but as interest is his chief end, he will use the most effectual means to advance it. He will aggravate circumstances to make his testimony valuable; he will be sorry if the person he accuseth should be able to clear himself; in short, he is labouring a point which he thinks necessary to his own good; and it would be a disappointment to him, that his neighbour should prove innocent.

5^{thly}, EVERY good subject is obliged to bear witness against his neighbour, for any action or words, the telling of which would be of advantage to the public, and the concealment

cealment dangerous, or of ill example. Of this nature are all plots and conspiracies against the peace of a nation, all disgraceful words against a prince, such as clearly discover a disloyal and rebellious heart: But where our prince and country can receive no damage or disgrace; where no scandal or ill example is given; and our neighbour, it may be, provoked by us, happeneth privately to drop a rash or indiscreet word, which in strictness of law might bring him under trouble, perhaps to his utter undoing; there we are obliged, we ought, to proceed no further than warning and reproof.

IN describing to you the several kinds of false witnesses, I have made it less necessary to dwell much longer upon this head; because a faithful

ful witness, like every thing else, is known by his contrary: Therefore it would be only repetition of what I have already said to tell you, that the strictest truth is required in a witness; that he should be wholly free from the malice against the person he accuses; that he should not aggravate the smallest circumstance against the criminal, nor conceal the smallest in his favour; and to crown all, though I have hinted it before, that the only cause or motive of his undertaking an office, so subject to censure, and so difficult to perform, should be the safety and service of his prince and country.

UNDER these conditions and limitations (but not otherwise) there is no manner of doubt, but a good man may lawfully and justly become

S E R M O N V. 161

a witness in behalf of the public, and may perform that office (in its own nature not very desirable) with honour and integrity. For the command in the text is positive as well as negative; that is to say, as we are directed not to bear false witness against our neighbour, so we are to bear true. Next to the word of God, and the advice of teachers, every man's conscience strictly examined will be his best director in this weighty point; and to that I shall leave him.

It might perhaps be thought proper to have added something by way of advice to those who are unhappily engaged in this abominable trade and sin of bearing false witness; but I am far from believing or supposing any of that destructive
tribe

162 S E R M O N V.

tribe are now my hearers. I look upon them as a sort of people that seldom frequent these holy places, where they can hardly pick up any materials to serve their turn, unless they think it worth their while to misrepresent or pervert the words of the preacher: And whoever is that way disposed, I doubt, cannot be in a very good condition to edify and reform himself by what he heareth. God in his mercy preserve us from all the guilt of this grievous sin forbidden in my text, and from the snares of those who are guilty of it.

I SHALL conclude with one or two precepts given by *Moses* from God to the children of *Israel*, in the *xxiii*d of *Exod.* 1, 2.

Thou shalt not raise a false report:

Put

S E R M O N V. 163

*Put not thine hand with the wicked,
to be an unrighteous witness.*

*Thou shalt not follow a multitude to
do evil, neither shalt thou speak in a
cause to decline after many, to wrest
judgment.*

Now to God the Father, &c.

S

PO

S E R M O N VI.

O N T H E

POOR MAN'S CONTENTMENT.

5

S
P
I
r
f
v
r
r
r
r

S E R M O N VI.

PHILIP. Chap. iv. Part of the 11th
Verse.

*I have learned, in whatsoever state I
am, therewith to be content.*

THE holy scripture is full of expressions to set forth the miserable condition of man during the whole progress of his life; his weakness, pride, and vanity, his unmeasurable desires, and perpetual disappointments, the prevalency of his passions, and the corruptions of his reason, his deluding hopes, and his real, as well as imaginary fears; his natural and artificial wants; his cares and anxieties; the diseases of his body,
and

and the diseases of his mind; the shortness of his life; his dread of a future state, with his carelessness to prepare for it: And the wise men of all ages have made the same reflections.

BUT all these are general calamities, from which none are excepted; and, being without remedy, it is vain to bewail them. The great question, long debated in the world, is, whether the rich or the poor are the least miserable of the two? It is certain; that no rich man ever desired to be poor, and that most, if not all, poor men desire to be rich; from whence it may be argued, that, in all appearance, the advantage lieth on the side of wealth, because both parties agree in preferring it before poverty. But this reasoning will be found to be false: For, lay it down

down as a certain truth, that God Almighty hath placed all men upon an equal foot, with respect to their happiness in this world, and the capacity of attaining their salvation in the next; or, at least, if there be any difference, it is not the advantage of the rich and the mighty. Now, since a great part of those, who usually make up our congregations, are not of considerable station, and many among them of the lower sort, and since the meaner people are generally, and justly, charged with the sin of repining and murmuring at their own condition, to which, however, their betters are sufficiently subject, (although, perhaps, for shame, not always so loud in their complaints) I thought it might be useful to reason upon this point in as plain a manner as I can.

I shall therefore shew, first, that the poor enjoy many temporal blessings, which are not common to the rich and the great: and, likewise, that the rich and the great are subject to many temporal evils, which are not common to the poor.

BUT here I would not be misunderstood; perhaps, there is not a word more abused than that of the poor, or wherein the world is more generally mistaken. Among the number of those who beg in our streets, or are half starved at home, or languish in prison for debt, there is hardly one in a hundred who doth not owe his misfortunes to his own laziness or drunkenness, or worse vices.

To these he owes those very diseases

eases which often disable him from getting his bread. Such wretches are deservedly unhappy; they can only blame themselves; and when we are commanded to have pity on the poor, these are not understood to be of the number.

It is true, indeed, that sometimes honest, endeavouring men are reduced to extreme want, even to the begging of alms, by losses, by accidents, by diseases, and old age, without any fault of their own: But these are very few, in comparison of the other; nor would their support be any sensible burden to the public, if the charity of well-disposed persons were not intercepted by those common scrollers, who are most importunate, and who least deserve it. These, indeed, are pro-

H 2

perly

172 S E R M O N VI.

perly and justly called the poor, whom it should be our study to find out and distinguish, by making them partake of our superfluity and abundance.

BUT neither have these any thing to do with my present subject : For, by the poor I only intend the honest, industrious artificer, the meaner sort of tradesmen, and the labouring man, who getteth his bread by the sweat of his brows, in town or country, and who make the bulk of mankind among us.

First, I shall therefore shew, first, that the poor (in the sense I understand the word) do enjoy many temporal blessings, which are not common to the rich and great ; and likewise, that the rich and great are sub-
ject

ject to many temporal evils, which are not common to the poor.

Secondly, FROM the arguments offered to prove the foregoing head, I shall draw some observations that may be useful for your practice.

1. As to the first: Health, we know, is generally allowed to be the best of all earthly possessions, because it is that, without which we can have no satisfaction in any of the rest. For riches are of no use, if sickness taketh from us the ability of enjoying them, and power and greatness are then only a burthen. Now, if we would look for health, it must be in the humble habitation of the labouring man, or industrious artificer, who earn their bread by the sweat of their brows, and usual-

H 3.

ly.

ly live to a good old age with a great degree of strength and vigour.

THE refreshment of the body by sleep is another great happiness of the meaner sort. Their rest is not disturbed by the fear of thieves and robbers, nor is it interrupted by surfeits of intemperance. Labour and plain food supply the want of quieting draughts; and the wise man telleth us, that the sleep of the labouring man is sweet. As to children, which are certainly accounted of as a blessing, even to the poor, where industry is not wanting; they are an assistance to their honest parents, instead of being a burthen; they are healthy and strong, and fit for labour; neither is the father in fear, lest his heir should be ruined by an unequal match; nor is he solicitous.

S E R M O N VI. 175

licitous about his rising in the world, further than to be able to get his bread.

THE poorer sort are not the objects of general hatred or envy; they have no twinges of ambition, nor trouble themselves with party-quarrels, or state divisions. The idle rabble, who follow their ambitious leaders in such cases, do not fall within my description of the poorer sort; for, it is plain, I mean only the honest industrious poor in town or country, who are safest in times of public disturbance, in perilous seasons, and public revolutions, if they will be quiet, and do their own business: For artificers and husbandmen are necessary in all governments: But in such seasons, the rich are the public mark, because they are oftentimes

176 S E R M O N VI.

of no use, but to be plundered ; like some sort of birds, who are good for nothing, but their feathers ; and so fall a prey to the strongest side.

LET us proceed on the other side to examine the disadvantages that the rich and the great lie under, with respect to the happiness of the present life.

FIRST then ; while health, as we have said, is the general portion of the lower sort, the gout, the dropsy, the stone, the cholic, and all other diseases are continually haunting the palaces of the rich and the great, as the natural attendants upon laziness and luxury. Neither does the rich man eat his sumptuous fare with half the appetite and relish, that even the beggars do the crumbs

crumbs which fall from his table : But, on the contrary, he is full of loathing and disgust, or at best of indifference, in the midst of plenty. Thus their intemperance shortens their lives, without pleasing their appetites.

BUSINESS, fear, guilt, design, anguish, and vexation are continually buzzing about the curtains of the rich and the powerful, and will hardly suffer them to close their eyes, unless when they are dozed with the fumes of strong liquors.

It is a great mistake to imagine, that the rich want but few things ; their wants are more numerous, more craving, and urgent, than those of poorer men : For these endeavour only at the necessaries of life, which

178 S E R M O N VI.

make them happy, and they think no farther : But the desire of power and wealth is endless, and therefore impossible to be satisfied with any acquisitions.

If riches were so great a blessing as they are commonly thought, they would at least have this advantage, to give their owners chearful hearts and countenances; they would often stir them up to express their thankfulness to God, and discover their satisfaction to the world. But, in fact, the contrary to all this is true. For where are there more cloudy brows, more melancholy hearts, or more ingratitude to their great Benefactor, than among those who abound in wealth? And, indeed, it is natural that it should be so, because those men, who covet things

things that are hard to be got, must be hard to please; whereas a small thing maketh a poor man happy; and great losses cannot befall him.

It is likewise worth considering, how few among the rich have procured their wealth by just measures; how many owe their fortunes to the sins of their parents, how many more to their own? If men's titles were to be tried before a true court of conscience, where false swearing, and a thousand vile artifices, (that are well known, and can hardly be avoided in human courts of justice) would avail nothing; how many would be ejected with infamy and disgrace? how many grow considerable by breach of trust, by bribery and corruption? How many have sold their religion, with the rights

and liberties of themselves and others, for power and employments?

AND, it is a mistake to think, that the most hardened sinner, who oweth his possessions or titles to any such wicked arts of thieving, can have true peace of mind, under the reproaches of a guilty conscience, and amidst the cries of ruined widows and orphans.

I know not one real advantage that the rich have over the poor, except the power of doing good to others: But this is an advantage which God hath not given wicked men the grace to make use of. The wealth acquired by evil means was never employed to good ends; for that would be to divide the kingdom of *Satan* against itself. What-
ever

ever hath been gained by fraud, avarice, oppression, and the like, must be preserved and increased by the same methods.

I shall add but one thing more upon this head, which I hope will convince you, that God (whose thoughts are not as our thoughts) never intended riches or power to be necessary for the happiness of mankind in this life; because it is certain, that there is not one single good quality of the mind absolutely necessary to obtain them, where men are resolved to be rich at any rate; neither honour, justice, temperance, wisdom, religion, truth, or learning; for a slight acquaintance of the world will inform us, that there have been many instances of men in all ages, who have arrived at great possessions

feſſions and great dignities, by cunning, fraud, or flattery, without any of theſe, or any other virtues that can be named. Now, if riches and greatneſs were ſuch bleſſings, that good men without them could have their ſhare of happineſs in this life; how cometh it to paſs, that God ſhould ſuffer them to be often dealt to the worſt, and moſt profligate of mankind? that they ſhould be generally procured by the moſt abominable means, and applied to the baſeſt and moſt wicked uſes? This ought not to be conceived of a juſt, a merciful, a wiſe, and Almighty Being. We muſt therefore conclude, that wealth and power are in their own nature, at beſt, but things indifferent; and that a good man may be equally happy without them, provided that he hath a ſufficiency
 of

S E R M O N VI. 183

of the common blessings of human life to answer all the reasonable and virtuous demands of nature, which his industry will provide, and sobriety will prevent his wanting. *Agur's* prayer, with the reasons of his wish, are full to this purpose: "Give me
 " neither poverty nor riches. Feed
 " me with food convenient for me;
 " lest I be full and deny thee, and
 " say, Who is the Lord? Or, lest I
 " be poor, and steal, and take the
 " name of my God in vain."

FROM what hath been said, I shall, in the second place, offer some considerations, that may be useful for your practice.

AND here I shall apply myself chiefly to those of the lower sort, for whose comfort and satisfaction this discourse

184 S E R M O N VI

discourse is principally intended. For, having observed the great sin of those, who do not abound in wealth, to be that of murmuring and repining, that God hath dealt his blessings unequally to the sons of men, I thought it would be of great use to remove out of your minds so false and wicked an opinion, by shewing that your condition is really happier than most of you imagine.

First, THEREFORE, it hath been always agreed in the world, that the present happiness of mankind consisted in the ease of our body and the quiet of our mind; but, from what hath been already said, it plainly appears, that neither wealth nor power do in any sort contribute to either of these two blessings. If, on
the

S E R M O N VI. 135

the contrary, by multiplying our desires, they increase our discontents; if they destroy our health, gall us with painful diseases, and shorten our life; if they expose us to hatred, to envy, to censure, to a thousand temptations, it is not easy to see why a wise man should make them his choice, for their own sake, although it were in his power. Would any of you, who are in health and strength of body, with moderate food and raiment earned by your own labour, rather chuse to be in the rich man's bed, under the torture of the gout, unable to take your natural rest, or natural nourishment, with the additional load of a guilty conscience, reproaching you for injustice, oppressions, covetousness, and fraud? No; but you would take the riches and power, and leave behind

hind the inconveniencies that attend them; and so would every man living. But that is more than our share, and God never intended this world for such a place of rest as we would make it; for the scripture assureth us, that it was only designed as a place of trial. Nothing is more frequent, than a man to wish himself in another's condition; yet he seldom doth it without some reserve: He would not be so old; he would not be so sickly; he would not be so cruel; he would not be so insolent; he would not be so vicious; he would not be so oppressive; so gripping; and so on. From whence it is plain, that, in their own judgment, men are not so unequally dealt with, as they would at first sight imagine: For, if I would not change my condition with another man,
without

S E R M O N VI. 187

without any exception or reservation at all, I am in reality more happy than he.

Secondly, You of the meaner sort are subject to fewer temptations than the rich; and therefore your vices are more unpardonable. Labour subdueth your appetites to be satisfied with common things; the business of your several callings filleth up your whole time; so that idleness, which is the bane and destruction of virtue, doth not lead you into the neighbourhood of sin: Your passions are cooler, by not being inflamed with excess, and therefore the gate and the way that lead to life are not so strait or so narrow to you, as to those who live among all the allurements to wickedness. To serve God with the best of your care
and

and understanding, and to be just and true in your dealings, is the short sum of your duty, and will be the more strictly required of you, because nothing lieth in the way to divert you from it.

Thirdly, It is plain from what I have said, that you of the lower rank have no just reason to complain of your condition; because, as you plainly see, it affordeth you so many advantages, and freeth you from so many vexations, so many distempers both of body and mind, which pursue and torment the rich and powerful.

Fourthly, You are to remember and apply, that the poorest person is not excused from doing good to others, and even relieving the wants
of

S E R M O N VI. 189

of his distressed neighbour, according to his abilities ; and if you perform your duty in this point, you far outdo the greatest liberalities of the rich, and will accordingly be accepted of by God, and get your reward: For, it is our Saviour's own doctrine, when the widow gave her two mites. The rich give out of their abundance ; that is to say, what they give, they do not feel it in their way of living: But the poor man who giveth out of his little stock, must spare it from the necessary food and raiment of himself and his family. And, therefore our Saviour adds, " that the widow gave
 " more than all who went before
 " her; for she gave all she had, even
 " all her living ;" and so went home utterly unprovided to supply her necessities.

Lastly,

190 S E R M O N VI.

Lastly, As it appeareth from what hath been said, that you of the lower rank have, in reality, a greater share of happiness, your work of salvation is easier, by your being liable to fewer temptations; and as your reward in heaven is much more certain, than it is to the rich, if you seriously perform your duty, for yours is the kingdom of heaven; so your neglect of it will be less excusable, will meet with fewer allowances from God, and will be punished with double stripes. For, the most unknowing among you cannot plead ignorance in what you have been so early taught, I hope, so often instructed in, and which is so easy to be understood, I mean the art of leading a life agreeable to the plain and positive laws of God. Perhaps you may think you lie under

S E R M O N VI. 191

der one disadvantage, which the great and rich have not; that idleness will certainly reduce you to beggary; whereas those who abound in wealth lie under no necessity either of labour or temperance to keep enough to live on. But this is indeed one part of your happiness, that the lowness of your condition, in a manner, forceth you to what is pleasing to God, and necessary for your daily support. Thus your duty and interest are always the same.

To conclude; since our blessed Lord, who, instead of a rich and honourable station in this world, was pleased to chuse his lot among men of the lower condition; let not those, on whom the bounty of providence hath bestowed wealth and honours, despise the men who are placed

192 S E R M O N VI.

placed in an humble and inferior station; but rather, with their utmost power, by their countenance, by their protection, by just payment for their honest labour, encourage their daily endeavours for the virtuous support of themselves and their families. On the other hand, let the poor labour to provide things honest in the sight of all men; and so, with diligence in their several employments, live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, that they may obtain that glorious reward promised in the gospel to the poor, I mean the kingdom of heaven.

Now to God the Father, &c.

6 MA 65

END of the FIRST VOLUME.

